

# APPALACHIA AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

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Association

Edited by:  
ELIZABETH C. FINE

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Volume Seven

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The Appalachian Consortium was a non-profit educational organization composed of institutions and agencies located in Southern Appalachia. From 1973 to 2004, its members published pioneering works in Appalachian studies documenting the history and cultural heritage of the region. The Appalachian Consortium Press was the first publisher devoted solely to the region and many of the works it published remain seminal in the field to this day.

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# Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association

Volume 7 1995

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# Introduction

Elizabeth C. Fine

When Pat Buchanan called for a cultural war at the 1992 Republican National Convention, he attested to the heightened awareness of the politics of culture in American life. In this last decade of the twentieth century, many cultural choices—the food we eat, the materials we wear, the products we buy, the language we use, the medical choices we make—all have political interpretations and repercussions. “Cultural space is contested space,” someone once said, and those who study the Appalachian region have become keenly aware of the political dimension of culture, which is no longer conceived of as a taken-for-granted, “natural” given, but as a socially constructed, emergent, and often highly contested phenomenon (Banks, Billings, and Tice 1993; Maggard 1983, Clifford 1988).

Ever since Henry Shapiro’s classic study of the representation of Appalachia in American consciousness (1978), scholars have been much more aware of the political dimensions of culture and the complexities that go along with studying it or promoting cultural programs. The often negative images conveyed by local color writers and home missionaries served well the exploitative goals of early industrialists, who could pat themselves on the back for bringing “progress” to such benighted people. And these same images no doubt fed into the subcultural model of poverty, which as Helen Lewis and Edward Knipe point out, had political consequences in the War on Poverty (Lewis and Knipe 1978). The cultural models and programs developed by government bureaucrats during the War on Poverty contributed to subsequent media representa-

tions of the region, which in turn, stimulated more adherents to the subcultural or culture of poverty model of Appalachia (Bowler 1985). Not just social workers, but educators and cultural workers have used culture for political ends, as David Whisnant has documented in *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (1983).

The 1994 conference on Appalachia and the Politics of Culture was well attended, attracting over 400 scholars, students, and activists to Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg. The conference featured forty-four programs, with 101 individual presentations. Forty-one participants submitted papers for publication. Regrettably, not all of the very fine submissions could be published here. Slightly over a third of the articles submitted were selected by members of the program committee, other appropriate scholars, and the editor.

In defining the theme for the 1994 Conference of the Appalachian Studies Association, I wrote in the call for papers that the politics of culture or cultural politics refers to "Social and political forces that influence what elements of a culture are featured or suppressed, promoted or ignored, sanctioned or censored." The keynote speaker, folklorist Archie Green, identified with uncanny foresight a number of critical issues dealing with the politics of culture that are developed by the contributors to this volume. Looking at the theme from many angles, Green raises questions about who has authority to write about Appalachia and the rift between insiders and outsiders of the region over its portrayal. Moving from the politics of *who* studies Appalachia to *what* is studied, Green challenges us to push our history of mountain images back before the local color movement and industrialization to the European antecedents of Appalachian culture. Examining the political impact of the concept of cultural politics, Green juxtaposes it with political action outside the academy, challenging us to engage not only in the political process in the United States, but in the world. "Perhaps the deepest question we all face," says Green, "is whether Appalachians can to any degree live with dignity both inside and outside mainstream America, while mountaineers across the globe are brutalized."

The contributors to this volume have all addressed the conference theme, albeit in different ways. In "Out in the Mountains," Kate Black and Marc A. Rhorer focus our attention on an ignored area of Appalachian Studies—the lives of lesbian and gay persons and their experiences within a mountain region. These oral histories forcefully attest to the cultural hegemony of heterosexism and the political consequences of "coming out" in Appalachia.

Three essays examine the cultural politics surrounding musical and material culture. In exploring the differences in vitality between the dance traditions of an African American and an European American

community, Susan Eike Spalding discusses the impact of the War on Poverty, the folk revival movement, and the Black Power movement on African American old-time fiddlers and square dancers, calling attention to the effects of cultural programs and movements on dance traditions. In a critique of the work of two early female folk song collectors, Linda Plaut and Lyn Wolz examine the motivations and methods of Annabel Morris Buchanan and Ann Geddes Gilchrist. Did they exploit their informants for selfish ends, or did they treat them with respect in a genuine effort to preserve their music for future generations? Just as purveyors of musical culture act politically, so do purveyors of material culture, as Kathleen Curtis Wilson shows in her analysis of the coverlets woven and marketed by the Clinch Valley Blanket Mills. Although the coverlets were made by machines, Wilson shows how the proprietors skillfully used folk images of handwoven coverlets to market their wares outside the region and thus helped perpetuate a static and false image of Appalachia.

Just as Archie Green challenges us to push our historical studies of the region back to earlier ages, two studies admirably expand our understanding of the past. Donald Edward Davis, in "Before Albion's Seed," examines the three hundred years preceding the eighteenth-century Appalachian frontier and the impact of the Mississippian, Cherokee, and Spanish cultures. He argues that Appalachian culture evolved in relationship to the complex interactions between social and environmental forces. In "Connecting Appalachia," Tom Costa also turns the historical lens from the industrialization period to the colonial and antebellum periods, placing Appalachia in the broader context of American and southern frontier and rural history. His synthesis of recent work in early American history that pertains to Southern Appalachia corrects the essentialist view of a homogeneous Appalachian culture. This new body of research defies the traditional image of Appalachia as a backwater region and corrects political stereotyping.

The impact of gender roles in Appalachia has largely been ignored, but Robert Weise's exploration of the gender divisions and conflicts over property within pre-industrial households in Eastern Kentucky shows how these conflicts sometimes encouraged property owners to part with the minerals underlying their land. Thus, Weise's work helps correct the image that mineral sales in Appalachia were solely the result of outsiders taking advantage of an unsophisticated public.

Two studies in this volume deal with representations of coal town experiences—one based on oral histories and the other on literary interpretation. In an effort to further understand some of the conflicting interpretations of the quality of life for residents of coal towns, Mary La Lone has conducted oral histories with over fifty residents of a number of coal towns in southwest Virginia. Her essay identifies both positive and

negative experiences and points to the reasons why residents express complex attitudes toward the company towns. While the novel *Storming Heaven* by Denise Giardina is ostensibly about life in the West Virginia coal fields during the mine wars of the 1920s, Kim Gillespie shows how the novel can be read as a political commentary on and national allegory of the 1980s "decade of greed."

When individuals from differing cultural groups communicate, differences in using and interpreting speech often lead to socioeconomic and political repercussions, as Anita Puckett demonstrates in "Speech Acts and Cultural Resistance in a Rural Eastern Kentucky Community." Based on ethnographic studies of speech usage in a variety of work situations, Puckett shows how inappropriate usage of imperatives in work situations can result in labor relations problems. Language use is also an issue in Pam Cole's essay on how Southwest Virginia high school graduates fare when they cross the cultural terrain of a large university in the region. Through ethnographic interviews with four Appalachian high school graduates who entered a large university, Cole documents the oppression they experienced and shows how the students struggled to resolve the ambivalence they felt toward their Appalachian dialect and identity.

Just as language usage has social and political repercussions, so does teaching and education. Two essays explore the political dimensions of education. In "Teaching for Democracy," Shaunna L. Scott argues that teaching is a political act. She then evaluates texts and suggests pedagogy that further the goals of understanding regional social problems, debunking stereotypes, and empowering students. While Scott addresses the concerns of those who teach Appalachian Studies courses, Sally Maggard evaluates the complexity of designing new job training and education programs in Central Appalachia in an era of global economic transformation. Based on structured interviews with forty-four eastern Kentucky women about work and educational experiences, Maggard identifies gender as a factor in school dropout rates, low skill level of the labor force, and unsuccessful job training programs. She goes on to make practical recommendations for designing effective job training programs for Central Appalachia.

The last essay by Richard Blaustein takes up Archie Green's challenge to internationalize our perspectives on Appalachian culture. In "Scotland, Appalachia, and the Politics of Postmodern Culture," Blaustein reviews David McCrone's *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* to help understand developments within Appalachian Studies. He finds striking parallels and important differences between the politics of culture and identity in Scotland and Appalachia.

Taken together, these fifteen essays represent the interdisciplinary

nature of Appalachian Studies and the broad range of interests within the Appalachian Studies Association. They also represent a maturing field that is engaging itself in a critique not only of the political forces affecting the region, but of its own role as a political and cultural agent.

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# Appalachia: the View from San Francisco

Archie Green

To open with a question: why does the Appalachian Studies Conference invite a keynote speaker from the nation's Pacific edge; particularly, from a city in which Appalachia does not appear on cognitive screens? To compound this initial query: why should happy banquet guests be harangued by an out-of-region senior citizen with a topic as open ended as "The Politics of Culture?"

At gatherings such as these, keynoters habitually wear ribbons of Pollyanna or Jeremiah—cheery platitudes or doomsday calamity. Tonight, avoiding both modes, I would feel most comfortable with a straight case study, a report on empirical research, or the analysis of an expressive construct or event. However, custom places such descriptive papers in daily sessions, saving the dinner evening for mood or vision.

What, then, spills from the visitor's pack? At home, I hear San Franciscans who identify themselves constantly by life-style, ethnicity, occupation, or new-age belief, but never region. No acquaintance of mine uses *Westerner*, a brand that signifies saddles and spurs, guns and guitars. A few friends know vaguely my affection for hillbilly music, understood as a distant region's amusement far from the Golden Gate. These friends dismiss the rhinestone aberration as a tic, perhaps picked up while wandering east of the Sierra Nevada range.

I live in The Castro, a neighborhood seen frequently in television features commenting upon American sexuality. My recent published studies treat "laborlore," the expressive culture of working people across our country rather than in a single region. This research choice and place of residence have not disqualified me from commenting upon Appalachia. In short, the keynote invitation to a traveler, itself, counters conventional inside/outside polarity often built into our discourse.

I do not invoke this "we/they" dichotomy as a rhetorical device to

exaggerate my distance from mountain life, but rather to mark troublesome concerns within academic and public agencies. One such issue touches each scholar's charter. Who grants and who obtains the license to penetrate the cultural briar patch? Where do critics go to obtain their tags?

At times, we elevate race or class dialogue to matters of cultural jurisdiction. Can whites "dig" black blues? Should whites teach in African American campus programs? Do white scholars, by instinct or imperial design, distort black experience? Can intellectuals appreciate workers' anxieties? Should youths from comfortable quarters advance political platforms for working people? Why do traders in theory assert superiority over blue-collar artisans? To what extent do these questions alter if posed as other than race or class constructs: North/South, lowlander/highlander, mainstream/Appalachia?

In the formal call for papers, conference conveners used one definition for two interchangeable rubrics, *cultural politics* / *politics of culture*: "social and political forces that influence what elements of a culture are featured or suppressed, promoted or ignored, sanctioned or censored." Our readings reveal parallels: *political culture*, *culture of politics*, *political-cultural dialectic*, *cultural-political exchange*. Writers inflect these rubrics variously—synonymously or antithetically. Eventually, a lexicographer will sort out differences, search for cognates, and cite examples of initial appearances.

We shall hear conference panelists label our governing theme with diverse tags. Nevertheless, all labels imply a set of beliefs about power enacted/power represented. To illustrate: cultural arbiters make conscious choices in the manner of a Roman emperor presiding at the gladiatorial arena—winners, thumbs up; losers, thumbs down. In contemporary practice, the National Endowment for the Humanities approves a grant to study Emersonian transcendentalism but not transcendence in the poetry of Hank Williams. Is Hank's fan merely an unlucky applicant, or a pathetic victim of hegemonic forces relentlessly pulverizing vernacular culture?

Clearly, across the United States, deans, directors, philanthropists, curators, critics, editors, pundits, and panelists make political decisions every day. Hence, we watch the gestures, hidden or open, of such "commissars," regardless of their identifying letterheads. In recognizing the need to decode up/down judgments by American cultural "czars," Appalachians reach for "The Politics of Culture" as a fresh paradigm.

Armed with insight on political-cultural connections, some Appalachian activists assert a corollary belief: mountain natives make wise decisions; distant dwellers make unwise, if not evil decisions. I reject this position when uttered on matters of race by Leonard Jeffries or Khalid Abdul Muhammad. Should I overlook mountain chauvinism, unwilling-

ness to listen, and defensiveness raised to a high-art form?

Ultimately, to cope with sanction and stigma, we begin to judge our judges, to question their origins, to name their political values. Thus, we return to the us/them divide and ask whether or not this facile formula, geared to kinship, helps or hinders efforts at justice.

Challenge jumps from every corner. Are race and class more useful guides than region, ethnicity, religion, language, age, gender, occupation, health, or ethical code in gripping Appalachian experience? How do such diverse elements intersect and combine to shape everyday identity? Upon hearing Appalachians actually name themselves as Scotch-Irish, Cherokee, Baptist, Holy Roller, lawyer, teacher, home-nurse, Tar Heel, West Virginian, or as believing in the moral majority, holding membership in the National Rifle Association, marching under Right-to-Life banners, or living way up the holler, do we reject these categories as false, as subordinate to class and race dogma?

How does Appalachian fascination with the links of land to lore complicate issues of cultural politics within the region? Lest my questions seem abstract, I note remarks by Jerry Williamson on the film *Deliverance*: "The movie was angrily denounced in mountain institutions and at regional professional conferences as an impious return to hillbilly stereotypes, which had been used by past generations of corporate exploiters to justify land theft and wage slavery" (Forthcoming). By extension, some mountain critics viewed this film's novelist, script writers, and, above all, Hollywood producers, as the mutant offspring of hostile intellectuals and greedy moguls.

Does a reference to *Deliverance* seem outdated in 1994? Bobbie Ann Mason's and Gurney Norman's views on *The Kentucky Cycle* reveal the depth of mountain sensitivity to external portraiture (Mason 1993; Norman 1993). Should we advocate a Khomeini *fatwa* on Robert Schenkkan because he lacks Kentucky birth credentials, conducted research at UCLA, or, perhaps, because Greek drama's demands overwhelm him? How do we move from matters of a playwright's genes to those of literary style and structure, imagination and discipline?

No easy answers spring to mind. Before turning to a new passage in the maze, I touch on a personal aspect of any outsider's authority. While writing *Only a Miner* (1972), I remained conscious that I had worked on the San Francisco waterfront; never in a mountain coal mine. Should I have refrained from exploring "Dark as a Dungeon" or "I Am a Girl of Constant Sorrow" and from seeking out Merle Travis or Sarah Ogan Gunning? As a stranger to the region, I could have restricted studies to items recorded or composed by a set of cultural modernizers strangely categorized as "folksong revivalists." Such a path would have violated my soul as a worker and scholar, clouding esthetic code and moral pulse.

In the 1960s, I did not set out with a glossy agenda for Appalachia.

Then, I conceived *Only a Miner* as a ballad scholar's offering stemming from affection for songs by and about coal miners. The poetry of the lines, "While he was working for those whom he loved/The boulder that crushed him came down from above" reinforced shivery scenes of industrial accidents on "my" jobs. Did God above or a careless crane operator below send deathly power from high voltage line to crane boom to cement bucket to roof pour to city morgue? What power locked into song bridged a continent, thus linking Kentucky coal drift and California construction site?

Why did mountain students see my book as contributing to regional dialogue and consciousness raising? If a lesson can be extracted from my digging for fossil roots, for truth long buried underground, it lies in the complex interchange of creativity and agency locked into mine-camp song text, and, by extension, fiddle tune, duck decoy, and coverlet pattern.

We can restate the politics of culture issue by resorting to a meta-physical abstraction: solipsism. The self only knows itself; one lives alone in an isolated den; consign blues to blacks; leave the ballad "The Hard Working Miner" to hard-working miners. Painfully, I learned the word *solipsism* at age sixteen, and have spent the subsequent six decades scaling its slippery walls. I shall not be pushed into a prison cell in the name of any party-line agenda, or, for that matter, by campus seers who walk the walk and talk the talk of canonicity, master narrative, essentialism, binary opposition, science of society, dialectical materialism, or post-modern praxis.

I am painfully aware, and share openly with conference colleagues, that I, too, revel in "big words." Familiar words bring pleasure; strange words, terror. Logically, my verbal choices are not superior to those of others. Hence, I must struggle to distinguish speech shield from sword, as I return to the challenge of understanding language as it supplies the building blocks of identity and community.

Here, I segue from questions of who studies Appalachia to those of matters studied. As a pluralist, I see no bounds to this conference's discourse—we lay claim to all academic fields, and some not yet named. Fortunately, in the years since our group first met in Berea in 1977, planners have not acted as stern gatekeepers determined to restrict sessions only to problems in political economy.

By asking who fills the purse to film *The Dukes of Hazard*, or who manipulates zoning codes to place Alpine ski villages on Blue Ridge heights, we jump disciplinary fences. It seems obvious that cultural choice should involve interpretation by political scientists, economists, and sociologists. It may not be clear to political activists that specialists in language and literature, arts and philosophy, necessarily contribute to explicating cultural metaphysics.

From many fields, I select an esoteric area, art history, to comment on identity—Harlan to Boone, Cumberland Gap to Sourwood Mountain. At the Pacific rim, when Appalachia rises from the mist, it appears as an upland island, an enclaved land mass, locked in the North American continent. This island seems better known to Californians who read novels and watch movies than to those who examine geography texts.

At times, political junkies supplement fiction with reportage on resistance—for example, brave miner defies cruel operator and deflects strip-mine 'dozers. Documentary film footage, muckraking exposé, editorial column, and local-color sketch merge. Do we visualize the platonic miner with a French liberty cap, Daniel Boone coonskin cap, decal-adorned plastic hard hat, or a Vietnam vet's combat helmet?

For many Americans, fine artists with brush at easel stamped other regions memorably. William Sidney Mount favored Long Island's bucolic haymakers and eel catchers. George Caleb Bingham limned boatmen and stump speakers at the Mississippi-Missouri confluence. Further west, Frederic Remington and Charles Russell charted the West with cowboy portraiture. George Catlin, Carl Bodmer, and Alfred Jacob Miller vivified native life from the Great Plains to the Rockies.

Catlin and his peers honored stoic Indians who defied confinement to canvas. By contrast, Thomas Cole reduced humans to miniature scale within Hudson River Valley mystical landscapes. In 1929, Grant Wood transformed an Iowa farm couple into mid-American icons. Finally, Thomas Hart Benton elevated Ozark sorghum makers and string-band musicians to Jefferson's pantheon. Benton's student Jackson Pollock, who had sketched Appalachian miners, helped bury regional art by turning eyes away from hilly contours to the hieroglyphs of psychic tension.

Although Appalachian artists, either native-born or attracted to the Southern Highlands, have limned their region, no mountaineer has achieved the fame of a Bingham or Benton as a genre or regional painter. Why? Who among us comments upon the setting in which artistry flourishes and gathers criticism? For too many years, visitors have approached Appalachian art as a series of bright quilts or a set of swirling hoe-down skirts. A lonesome ballad's inner lines seem more familiar to mountain fans than does an Appalachian painting.

To whom does "missing" fine art matter: museum curators or students of Appalachia? We have treated Li'l Abner and Jed Clampett as the alpha and omega in mountain imagery. We have devoted at least one session in each of seventeen conferences to archetype and stereotype—surely invented by outsiders to shame us. I suggest that time's a-wastin' in the task of mustering attention to the word *image* as literal picture, political emblem, and mythic paradigm.

I plead with friends to go back ages before Manhattan magazine

editors asked a staff artist to illustrate a Mary Murfree story. Does anyone know who first drew the Appalachian as a bean-pole-thin figure (taciturn, generous, distant) or as a moonshine-swigging fool (idiotic, treacherous, lusty)? Do we really want our pictorial chronology to open in the 1880s? Rodger Cunningham served colleagues well, and with considerable flair, in scaling the time plateau before *Harper's Weekly* emerged. Pushing Appalachia's time line back thousands of years, *Apples on the Flood* opened eyes to long-dim scenes (1987). Who will undertake a picture book to complement Cunningham's gift?

Where are the art folios of European depictions of wild men, backwoodsmen, and outlaws before 1492? Who seeks John White's renditions of Celts and Picts as England's primitive ancestors, as well as precursors of Indianized colonists (half-breeds, renegades, squaw-men) on the Allegheny Front (Hulton 1984)? Did not Natty Bumppo, Deerslayer, and Leatherstocking anticipate Boone and Crockett? Does James Fenimore Cooper stand at Denise Giardina's elbow?

I do not wish to divert colleagues into art or literary history, or involve them in editing coffee-table anthologies. Mountain imagery has a convoluted pedigree—one that we ignore at the expense of sophistication in endeavors. A parenthetical note adds a bit of glamour to our topic: campus critics chant a mantra, "the politics of representation," much as we call up "image" and "stereotype." Thus, I plead, let's turn the kaleidoscope of Appalachian representation—newspaper cartoon, magazine engraving, post-office mural, cinema poster, television-program publicity kit, oak-splint basket, roadside death memorial.

For those to whom pictorial imagery seems digressive from realpolitik, I return to the social dimensions of regionalism. This very meeting attracts participants versed in science, humanities, communications technology, and community action. The first Appalachian Studies Conference organizers, guided by Loyal Jones, deliberately brought together advocates and scholars. Over the years, during which labels have fluctuated, conferees have divided both on degrees of commitment to political position and willingness to highlight cultural expression.

Some conference "steadies" have dealt with regional marginality not by an agreed-upon political creed, but rather by an informal consensus to treat culture broadly—dialect, folk art, bluegrass music, individual spirit, pride-in-land, and egalitarianism. Appalachians do not constitute a religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic, occupational, political, or gender-based enclave. What, then, except a cultural construct of emblematic strength such as "Appalachianity" can tie the region's knot? We return, willingly or not, to land-lore connections.

Regional boundary and sub-regional contours become persistent conference topics as no Appalachian map satisfies all mountain advocates. We do not fault skilled cartographers who recognize ridge and

cove; we ask why they find it difficult to chart cultural material. Over the years, I have seen meeting maps contract and expand, and have welcomed panels on “out-migrants” to Cincinnati. From my perspective, we need also to encompass Appalachians from Cascade Range forests to Southwest sunbelt malls. Harriette Arnow’s dollmakers now carve in Calaveras and Clackamas counties.

Conference panelists do not call for dismembering the United States, for raising a sovereign flag at Sevierville. Essentially, I do not fear mountain secessionists; I do fear men of power distant from Blacksburg—figures, who in pernicious ways, may influence political culture in Appalachia for decades ahead. Four scarecrows make the point: Slobodan Milosevic, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Rush Limbaugh, Ollie North. If these names seem grotesquely juxtaposed, please substitute others. The scroll unrolls from Tiananmen Square and Hebron mosque to mountain school yard.

Why do I relate global tragedy to Appalachian discourse? When in the name of the Serbian Socialist Party, Milosevic employs ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and, in the name of Marxism, Chinese communists destroy temples in Tibet, few Appalachians will seek Belgrade or Beijing for advice. Shall we look to Belfast, Gaza, Kabul, Soweto? Does it matter to the child mowed down that the juggernaut holds a decorative red star, a star of David, a crescent moon, or a silver cross?

Perhaps the deepest question we all face is whether Appalachians can to any degree live with dignity both inside and outside mainstream America, while mountaineers across the globe are brutalized. Television did bring into our parlors the boom of Serbian guns pounding Sarajevo. We did see Kurdish families tenting on snow-clad peaks. But TV cameras cannot climb every slope of misery.

I commend Anna Tsing’s ethnographic book, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen*, for its report on an elusive group of hill folk in Kalimantan (Borneo). Indonesian elites denigrate this tribe as “Bukits” (hillbillies) while politicians clear-cut their timber for export to Japan (1994). Anna Tsing might well address our assembly, for she shatters conventional anthropological notions of backwards people frozen in time. Yet the best command of cultural theory by the most advanced scholar does not stem tribal destruction. Kalimantan’s Ishmaelites conjure ritual, narrative poetry, and shamanistic vision to ward off dams, oil rigs, and helicopters. Our Bukit cousins survive temporarily in margins between forest and field. Who will mourn their passing in an Indonesia racing to the Future?

I am far from the best person to offer alternate politics to conference guests, for I distrust packaged platforms. I must confess that except during the New Deal election when I cast an early vote for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, I have a long record of favoring losers. Similarly, in

hard-headed trade-union forums, I have advanced left-libertarian (Wobbly) visions, usually put down as romantic or antiquarian. In short, I am brother to a long line of mountain cranks, whittlers at the courthouse square, idlers in the country store.

In his current study of America's regionalist impulse, *Revolt of the Provinces*, Robert Dorman treats several interwar (1920-1945) movements proclaiming the utopian reconstruction of society: Harlem Renaissance, Manhattan elitism, Vanderbilt agrarianism, and rural populism (1993). Strange bedfellows, indeed, when Lewis Mumford, Howard Odum, Constance Rourke, J. Frank Dobie, Marie Sandoz, and Donald Davidson gathered under the tent of "cultural radicalism." Dorman uses this key term to distinguish those idealizing a "rural, frontier, decentralized, producerist, farm and village society—the older America—[from] the modern commercialized, consumerist, and mechanized mass society of the metropolis" (1993, xi-xii).

Appalachians seldom appear in Dorman's book, yet "cultural radicalism" serves to describe much of the philosophy inherent in our assembly. We know that which we oppose. We do not like outsiders in Pulitzer Prize-winning plays or daily comic strips who mock speech, deplore taste, or denigrate belief. Moving from statements of opposition, we challenge those who judge us by scrutinizing their credentials. Who grants them power? Why do they spend our tax dollars to reject our artistry?

Because *radical* has become an American pejorative, we seek alternative language to mask anger. With *cultural politics* and its twins, we blur direction and neutralize position. We divert attention from recognized labels (such as liberal, socialist, progressive, conservative, right-winger, fundamentalist) to "The Politics of Culture," at its heart, an academic pursuit.

Ironically, this conference's formal theme marks failure by each main political party to write a platform with planks on vernacular art, bed-rock demographic diversity, or cultural equity. Although President Clinton has appointed new chiefs at the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities, dedicated individuals within these agencies still struggle to devise programs that might alter dominant cultural strategies. Further I ask, will the president's faith in global competition and an information-highway-bound work force help castaway mountain folk, or, indeed, any dwellers stranded in American shoals?

I cast no stones in this gathering. Appalachians do associate as environmentalists and preservationists—causes which engage my energies. Mary Hufford's *Conserving Culture* gathers essays to describe how public servants report gains and losses in deflecting development, constructing "heritage corridors," or challenging tourism's benefits



(1994). Citizens who have suffered political slings know the perils in integrating concern for the snail darter with the right of mountain basket makers to sell their wares profitably.

Here, I find exemplars of the presentation of regional issues, naming a few or noting their achievements. I salute John Sayles for the film *Matewan* (1987). I wept at the belief embedded in his artistry. Seen by me only in television moments, the camouflage-clad miners (including mothers, wives, sisters, daughters) who held Pittston at bay reaffirm my faith in trade unionism. Julia Ardery, approaching Edgar Tolson, Kentucky wood carver and folk artist, demonstrates that fresh inquiry can bring edge to tools long dulled by careless use (1995). Bob Cantwell, another outsider, stretches the elegant language of cultural criticism to describe the Smithsonian's folk festival, a stage upon which Appalachians and their cousins turn American identity inside out (1993).

Among others, David Whisnant and I have parsed *political culture*, word and deed, in all its permutations. Whisnant's *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* helped transform a sub-title into an Appalachian guide (1983). His message makes sense—turn inward with critical insight and outward to forge fresh alliances. We see the breadth of such double vision in the studies Steve Fisher has gathered for *Fighting Back in Appalachia*. His essayists document a dance of dominance and resistance in the Southern Highlands (1993). The figures who emerge from this book view themselves alternately as patriots or guerrillas. Each contributor also points ahead to continued conflict over strategies (neo-populism or class-based politics), agents (workers or intellectuals), and discourse (abstract or plain).

We enjoy crediting companions, students, and mentors as we take pleasure in exchanging conversion stories. Strangers seek words to measure their attraction to the mountains. Youngsters within the region search for similar words to describe their flowering of consciousness. At some mysterious point in personal growth, one finds the connection of local dialect to school-board policy, or recognizes the tension between a neighbor's safety and a land developer's clout. We can judge *political culture* as a verbal pennant by its bearing at the point where personal knowledge and action converge.

Bluntly put, does our conference theme, "The Politics of Culture," encourage or displace engagement? Do we expect this catch phrase to trumpet a specific political program shifting power from the Potomac to the New River? Some activists charge that attention to cultural expression leads to political exhaustion. I know of no easy way to merge the roles of culture explicators and political activists, or the styles of those who come together at academic gatherings with those beyond campus walls. Yet, this conference's existence demands conversation at the barriers.

Perhaps attention to a particular problem can insure vitality in future gatherings. In meetings to come, let us explore the Appalachianization of America. I do not suggest that this catch phrase connotes only a moonscape of eroded land and stranded people—stump farmers at Puget Sound, flood refugees at the Mississippi, homeless/workless souls at chained factory gates in countless hamlets. Cannot mountain modes of intertwined self-reliance and sharing serve as national templates? I return to pictures on the cognitive screen of Twin Peaks' flanks as well as those in Big Stone Gap, Hiwassee, Red Jacket, and Laurel Bloomery.

To close: although my studies occupy old-fashioned space, I confess an occasional stroll down deconstruction's path. With such liberty, it seems proper to question our conference rubric. Am I the only one present who finds "The Politics of Culture" semantically unstable? Do its dual elements combine easily? Does it convey clear meaning?

Many Americans use *politics* to signal campaign hoopla, within-the-Beltway intrigue, or White House broken promises. Others hear *politics* as naming a mansion that holds a "Do Not Enter" sign. *Culture*, too, fares poorly, calling up long-hair music, formless poetry, and abstract art, as well as exclusionary prestige. Both words rumble dissonantly.

Although social scientists try to rescue their respective guides from debasement, the gulf remains deep between the language of town and gown. Here, one falls back upon anecdotal rather than quantitative data. I do not sense that citizens (other than at professional meetings) join *culture* to *politics* in everyday speech. I doubt that wide currency will validate our usage.

In assessing the rubric's future, we shall have to look at other ear-catching coinages such as *Partners for Peace* to deny or delay NATO membership to former Soviet captive nations, and *sustainable development* to suggest compatibility between extractive industry, economic growth, corporate greed, and regard for the earth's finite capacity. The phrase "The Politics of Culture" does not reach the status of a recognized oxymoron, yet it whispers ambiguity.

Despite concern for problems in speech and print usage, a term may yet emerge to describe the state's multiple power-granting and power-denying drives that encircle ordinary lives. New words, in time, do fill social vacuums. Metaphorically, we need to open a tool box for cross-cut hand saws and honed chisels that march across the grain of soft and hard woods, that aid the mechanic in cutting through knots and pitch pockets.

Let's not put our conference on hold until the right blades appear at the local hardware store, or until the final word hitches a ride on the next space ship. Ultimately, "The Politics of Culture," as a rubric, will dissatisfy leftist partisans for obscuring direct action. Similarly, rightists will reject the phrase for its threat to "family values" and other verities.

No single formula can, or should, promise all Americans access to one shining path.

With the best tools at hand, with or without adequate vocabularies, and conscious of danger, some Appalachians will demystify their cultural constructs by placing them on the widest bench of social force, while others will attend these same expressive forms with minute details of craft. Together, mountain artisans of large and small hand must build constant dialogue on imagery, power, and community.

Our meeting participants—in order to mark and hold the core of Appalachian identity—shape seals and grails. We use such jeweled ornaments to name bunkers in America's political jungle, to find coalition partners, or to frame formulas for ending poverty or insuring peace. We seek respect for diversity, clarity in expression, and cheer in companionship. Whether crafting a plain wooden seal or a decorated silver grail, we need to step away from work-shop or tool-bench. We need to stake out a vantage point on these mountains, verdant or denuded, from which to see as far as Port-au-Prince and Phnom Penh, Sarajevo and San Francisco.

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# **Out in the Mountains: Exploring Lesbian and Gay Lives**

**Kate Black and Marc A. Rhorer**

This research focuses on the lives of gays and lesbians and their experiences growing up in the mountains. The idea for this project began when Marc wanted to do a research paper on lesbians and gays in Appalachia and asked Kate, curator of the University of Kentucky Appalachian Collection, about prior research on the subject. Kate said, "There isn't anything." A few months later, while returning from the 1993 Appalachian Studies conference, we decided to present something about lesbians and gays at the 1994 conference. Though neither one of us is from the mountains, we both grew up in the rural South. Being gay and lesbian, we both knew other lesbians and gays in Lexington who grew up in the mountains. We hope that this exploratory work-in-progress will stimulate other researchers to include gays and lesbians in the conversation of Appalachian Studies.

We talked with five lesbians and four gay men from Eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, East Tennessee, and Western North Carolina ranging in ages from twenty to forty-five, in focused interviews. Only one of the interviewees continues to live in the mountains; the other eight live in Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky. All are white. We plan to interview others who have remained in the mountains. Participants were asked to allow their recorded interviews to become part of the oral history collection at the University of Kentucky, and most agreed. Before the interviews, we agreed on areas to explore: coming out experiences, homophobia, AIDS-phobia, and community building. Using a grounded research approach, an inductive method, we found several common themes in the rich stories of the participants: feelings of isolation, the

importance of community, fears from inside and outside the closet, various forms of oppression and discrimination, and identity.

### **Feelings of Isolation**

When we asked people to talk about the differences between being gay in the mountains and in urban areas, every interviewee expressed feelings of isolation in the mountains. While growing up, participants said, they had no one to turn to for guidance, support, and information when they began realizing they were homosexual. People felt there were no others with same-sex attractions, even to the extreme that some did not know gays or lesbians existed. When some participants mentioned the possibility of moving back to the mountains, they noted that the most difficult part would be coping with the isolation from other gays and lesbians. One interviewee made contacts in Lexington before moving back home to insure some access to the gay community. Among a few participants there was a sense that mass-communication technology (particularly cable/satellite television) has the potential to reduce feelings of isolation by providing young lesbians and gays in the mountains access to non-heterosexist images.

The interviewees expressed feelings of isolation in a variety of ways. A lesbian put on academic probation her first year at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky, said, "A lot of the problem was I discovered the gay community. I never knew one existed. It was unbelievable! Every other person was gay" (5 1993). A gay man, speaking of his high school friends whom he now knows are gay, said, "At the time I thought they were people I got along well with, but I didn't realize why . . . I didn't know people who were gay" (7 1993). One of the interviewees often gives talks on homophobia at Kentucky colleges. Once when she was at Morehead State, a young man came up to her afterwards and asked, "How old did you say you were?" She answered, "Forty-two." Then he said, "You're the same age as my Mama. I didn't know there were any gay or lesbian people as old as my mama!" (2 1993). Another lesbian said, "The saddest part to me about growing up in the mountains as a gay person is that . . . you end up feeling like an outsider; you've got no one to talk to about these strange feelings you have and you have to end up like lots of young people growing up gay, being isolated, and you think about killing yourself 'cause you're so strange" (6 1993). One lesbian who came out to herself when she was thirteen found out the definition of lesbian when she "went to the public library and looked up 'homosexuality'. . . . There was absolutely no one to talk to" (5 1993). One young gay man explained, "To be gay in Clay City [Kentucky], it's hard" but it is harder out in the county where there isn't access to cable TV. He said, "MTV is preaching 'Free Your Mind' [but] your mind is not going to be free if you don't live inside the city limits" (9 1993).

## Finding a Community

This sense of isolation greatly diminished when people moved from the mountains to the city because in the urban setting they could meet and be with other gays and lesbians. While finding a community of other gays and lesbians was crucial, ironically, an increased feeling of anonymity in the city was equally important. Anonymity, which many could not obtain at home, allowed greater freedom from the scrutiny of those who might condemn them; most people expressed a much greater sense of comfort about being out in the city. In contrast, at home people felt as if they were under surveillance and subjects of the gossip networks, even after moving away to the city. However, several people mentioned a positive aspect of the tightly-knit nature of rural community: if a person came from an established family lineage in the mountains, she or he was less likely to be harassed for being lesbian or gay.

While discussing the differences between being gay in the mountains and in Lexington, one gay man said, "When you move to a bigger city, your reputation doesn't necessarily have that much weight. . . ." (3 1994). A lesbian summed it up this way: "Appalachian queers migrate out of there . . . the few that do live there are usually not totally rejected by the family but rejected by the community. They'll be real kind [to your face] but still say stuff behind your back" (5 1993). A woman who came out in the late 1960s and came often to the gay bar in Lexington said, "You had community [at The Bar], which gave you family, family of choice" (6 1993). A gay man made a similar assessment about his life in Lexington two decades later: "Living here, there's a lot more opportunities . . . to meet those of your kind—a lover, a boyfriend, a fuck buddy. . . . to live in Clay City, I wouldn't want to do that . . . it's just not open enough" (9 1993). One interviewee sees himself as both insider and outsider, a perspective from which he can examine the tension between the two. When he was eight he and his mother moved back to her family's community after years of living in Ohio. He described both his parents as coming from old Eastern Kentucky families. He said, "If someone comes in from the outside—straight or gay—it doesn't make any difference. They are going to have a very difficult time fitting into the community. If, however, they are from this long lineage, they will find it much easier to be who they are, regardless if they're gay or straight" (3 1994).

All the interviewees were asked to talk about how they found other lesbians and gays, either in the mountains or in their city homes. We found a variety of creative responses: "You go to the gym, you find gym rats" (6 1993). "[I]t takes one to know one" (9 1993). "In Boone [North Carolina], there was a lesbian softball league. It wasn't an official lesbian softball league, it just happened that most people on it were probably lesbian. . . . There was a student group. A lot of people would go

to a regional gay bar. . . . Recently, I know of people in Boone who get on e-mail and try to meet people that way" (7 1993). "Gaydar" (2 1993).<sup>1</sup> Finally, several people mentioned being invited to lesbian and gay parties, especially in mountain college towns.

## **Identity and Community**

We believe that identity and community are intricately linked. Since they can sometimes be in opposition, we were curious about how people reconciled this. For instance, we wondered if people identified themselves as both gay and Appalachian. While everyone readily identified themselves as gay or lesbian, we found that many people seemed to avoid directly addressing their Appalachian identities. In addition, some of the interviewees had not resolved their sense of conflict over being from the mountains.

One man referred to his "trapped" life in the mountains, equating living in the mountains with cultural isolation: "If I was trapped in Clay City, I would be myself, just like I was when I *was* trapped there. . . . Information and exposure to different cultures and different people is what really changes minds. . . . That's what causes accents, when people are trapped up in the mountains" (9 1993). The youngest of the interviewees, who is twenty, proudly said, "People are surprised when they find out where I'm from. . . . [My friends] say, 'I can't believe you turned out the way you did'" (8 1993). The one participant who has continued to live in Eastern Kentucky readily identified herself as Appalachian: "It's home, this is where the roots are" (6 1993). Another lesbian, describing what being Appalachian means to her, said, "It's the family, the heritage" (5 1993). One man, who used to live in Boone, expressed conflict over wanting to move back to the mountains but was not sure it is possible for him. Yet, in Boone, he feels a certain freedom not found in Lexington. "I feel sometimes people [in Boone] know me more as a person than as a gay person" (7 1993).

## **Facing Fears**

Since all the interviewees expressed an overwhelmingly greater sense of freedom and ability to be out in the city, we wanted to know how the dimensions of the "closet" change with a move to the city. We asked people to talk about what was scary or fearful about being out at home versus being out in the city. Though fear of being out was experienced in the city, the participants all noted that the situation was more hostile in the mountains for gays and lesbians. Males experienced much more physical aggression at home and seemed to have a limited definition of the term "fear," equating it with the threat of physical violence. We also found that males endured much verbal taunting in junior high and high school. Males and females both told stories of physical violence and



verbal taunting directed toward gay males in the mountains.

For females fear included psychological as well as physical violence. Women seemed to sustain more social ostracism (i.e., from family, friends, and church) and/or were forced into psychiatric care for a "cure." None of the men reported being sent to a therapist. Men were tormented because those around them suspected they were gay, while women were more likely to face threatening conditions if they were caught being sexual with a woman. However, one interviewee contradicted this representation when she told of local police cruising places where teenagers parked. She said when she was caught making out with her girlfriend, the police would generally laugh and tell them to go home, but when her gay male friends were caught, they were likely to be brutalized.

When asked about fear, a man said, "I've been scared that people would find out. I've been scared that if people knew I was gay, I would lose my job, people would say something to me, that I wouldn't have any recourse, wouldn't have any place to go." He went on to say how he was scared to kiss his lover good-bye when he dropped him off for work. Also, he feared "they'd hear my partner and I and they would come and bust down the doors and get us," a fear grounded in the North Carolina sodomy law (7 1993). Another gay man said, "I've heard stories of incredible physical violence against [gay] people." Then he told the story of a man in Breathitt County, Kentucky, who was killed and dismembered by local people because he was thought to be gay (3 1993). A lesbian said that one of her gay male friends was stabbed twenty-seven times while shopping in a country store in West Virginia, solely because he was homosexual.

Several males noted they were persistently taunted with words like "fag" and "sissy" throughout their adolescent schooling. A lesbian, who left her truck overnight at a body shop, said, "While it was there someone painted on the tailgate [near the pink triangle and rainbow decals] 'die fag' and slashed the two back tires." She explained that the perpetrator probably thought the truck was owned by a man because of the reference to "fag" (4 1994).

While describing the social ostracism she experienced, one lesbian said, "When I was in the eighth grade . . . because I came out to a couple of my friends . . . that proceeded to get me ostracized from overnight parties and church. . . ." (4 1994). One of the participants had a relationship during high school that was discovered by her girlfriend's parents. The parents came to a motel room where the two young women were staying for a softball tournament and pulled their daughter out of the room at 4:00 A.M. Another lesbian, who had a relationship with her teacher at Berea College, said "It turned out to be pretty devastating for both of us. She lost her job over it. I became this crisis point in my family. They decided I needed psychiatric help." After Berea College

officials exposed her to her parents, she was caught by her mother at her lover's house at 1:00 A.M. She ended with: "Here was this woman corrupting some poor little Appalachian girl who obviously didn't know what she was doing." At this point Kate and the interviewee started giggling and Kate said, "Yeah, you're supposed to be making brooms." Then she finished, "yeah, or spoon bread at the Tavern!" (6 1993).

### **Levels of Discrimination**

Gays and lesbians face discrimination both in the mountains and in the city. We defined "discrimination" as the public/civil face of homophobia, as did interviewees. Not surprisingly, gays and lesbians who work with children or young adults appear very susceptible to discrimination. We heard the story of two teachers in the mountains who were fired because they were rumored to be homosexual. One participant, who is out in most parts of her life, says she would never come out at her job working with school children in Eastern Kentucky because she "would be fired in a heartbeat" (5 1993). Many people expressed fear of being out at their jobs in the city, even when they did not work with children, because they were afraid of being fired or passed over for raises or promotions. Two of the participants told stories about gay bars that involved discrimination or the threat of it. These incidents gain even more importance because bars as public meeting places are historically central to the gay and lesbian community. One woman told of police surveillance behind The Bar in Lexington to observe those who went in and out. A man spoke about a gay bar owner in Huntington, West Virginia who did not want to be associated with anything "political," in this case having an AIDS literature table in his bar. The interviewee said the bar owner felt too vulnerable to actions of the local authorities and, therefore, did not want to do anything to call attention to his bar or his clientele.

A gay man told the story of how a lesbian high school teacher in North Carolina lost her job. One of her students believed the teacher was a lesbian and "prayed for her" publicly at church. She was fired "on the pretext that she cussed in class . . . but it was well known that it was because she was a lesbian" (7 1993). Recently in Lexington, a woman noted, "I can't prove anything from this, but I would swear I'm being discriminated against at my job. After I'd been working there for three months, one of the people who was in middle management took me into his office and told me that I shouldn't be working there because of my sexual orientation and that there was no reason for me to come back . . . apparently he forgot to tell anyone else this and the next time my shift rolled around I got a call asking me where I was. So I went in, didn't say anything about it, and I've been working there ever since" (4 1994). Several of the interviewees told stories of discrimination at public

meeting places. In Boone in the late 1980s, a group of gays who were not students wanted to start an off-campus gay organization and meeting place. Bomb and death threats were made. The police provided protection and “were pretty good about dealing with it . . . people would have to come in around the police when these meetings first went on” (7 1993). A lesbian who went frequently to the gay bar in Lexington during the early 1970s said, “it was frightening, going to The Bar. It was rough, tough. Police cars parked out back. People said, ‘don’t drive your car, they’re taking down license plate numbers,’ so there was all that harassment. So coming to the bar was not only an act of celebration, but an act of defiance” (6 1993).

## AIDS-phobia

We also asked people to talk about AIDS. We included AIDS-phobia in the discussions about various forms of homophobia, since the two have been viciously linked ever since the early days of the epidemic when AIDS was called GRID—Gay-Related Immune Deficiency. Surprisingly, one of the gay men interviewed did not know anyone who is HIV positive or has AIDS. Everyone acknowledged that AIDS-phobia exists, but did not seem to think it was more rampant one place or the other, except for one man who said he’d experienced more AIDS-phobia in Lexington—by both the straight and gay community—than in the mountains. He correlated AIDS-phobia with a higher HIV incidence in Lexington. Two people said that because they stick closely to the lesbian and gay community, or are outspoken advocates for the lesbian/gay community and for people with AIDS, they are not as likely to hear AIDS-phobic remarks and discussions.

When asked if she heard AIDS-phobic statements at home, one woman said, “More than anything else. More than homophobia, more than racist things . . . it’s not really [expressed] as trashing people with AIDS, it is just terror that they’re gonna get it” (5 1993). There were a few who said they had experienced people relating AIDS directly with homosexuality. One man noted that when he told his grandmother he was gay, the first thing she said was, “You’re gonna get AIDS!” He noted that she is an intelligent, politically aware woman, yet she immediately connected being gay with AIDS (8 1993). A lesbian said that when she comes out to people, they often respond with “Aren’t you afraid of AIDS?” This same woman, who works at an urban YMCA, stated employees must take an AIDS awareness class. The Y’s policy is to notify the supervisor if an HIV positive person is in a class or program. This information is passed up the ladder to the executive director. The interviewee pointed out to her co-workers at a post-class discussion that no one needed to know this information. The purpose of the AIDS awareness course was to treat *anyone* who is injured as if they were infected to

prevent infecting anyone else. "[I] was . . . knocked down by everyone else in the room, saying that it didn't matter, they [YMCA employees] deserve to know because they work with these children and adults and if they were infected they [YMCA employees] were going to treat them differently," she said (4 1994).

### **Internalizing Homophobia**

Like racism, homophobia is not only perpetrated by those who dominate, but is also internalized by those who are dominated. The internalized homophobia was sometimes acted out in religious proselytizing. One of our participants noted she knew a lesbian couple and used the Bible to try to convince them that their sexuality was a sin, prior to her own coming out in high school. Organized religion played an important part in most of the interviewees' lives—socially, morally, and spiritually. We found that many had deep inner struggles over their homosexuality, rooted in religious notions of sin and guilt. Two of the lesbians, however, resisted the oppression and repression of the church by questioning and railing against it. One woman, at a young age, was able to transform her questioning into a belief in social justice. For most of the interviewees, the extreme isolation contributed to their internalized homophobia. Many spoke movingly of the need to help lesbian and gay young people in the mountains know they are not abnormal or alone. Many suggested lesbian and gay visibility as a partial solution to this problem.

Here are some of the responses of the interviewees about these internalized conflicts: "[T]he church was the only social outlet in the town. So I wasn't going to church so much for religious/spiritual reasons as I was for social reasons. In fact, I learned quite early to keep my mouth shut when discussing the Bible and other issues because I asked too many questions that the answer was always 'pray about it and you'll see the truth'" (4 1994). "I really struggled with religion and going to hell . . . I really did not want to be gay. I've had a hard time accepting it. . . . probably the last five years it has gotten easy" (5 1993). A gay man, one of the youngest interviewees, went to Mass every day when he was thirteen and prayed, "Why do I have to be different? Why can't I be like everyone else?" He concluded, "I would hate for another generation of gay people to have to grow up and feel alienated, to feel like they are outcasts. . . . I consider myself, in a way, one of the lucky people who have finally been able to draw themselves into another community and find other people like themselves, so that they don't end up being drug addicts, or jumping off a bridge, or hanging themselves just because they have no role models, have no other friends that they can come out to. . . . They need someone to show them that they're OK, that they're not bad, that they're not going to hell. . . ." (9 1993).

## Some Last Words

**Marc A. Rhorer:** We have examined various aspects of the lives of gays and lesbians from the mountains. All of our participants addressed issues that revealed difficulties related to growing up homosexual in Appalachia. There are several areas which need further attention, specifically class differences and race. The differences in educational backgrounds of participants' families deserves further exploration. A few interviewees noted that their families were more racist than homophobic.

All of those who participated in this project have exhibited courage in many aspects of their lives. They have overcome a multitude of obstacles in their paths and have emerged to lead positive lives that are a reflection of their true selves. Though some participants were reluctant to identify themselves as Appalachian, they still expressed a sense of compassion for the gay and lesbian youth who inhabit the region. This expression of humanity came at the close of our interviews when we asked if there was any issue we had not covered that they would like to speak about. In some way, perhaps the sincerity of these people's stories can pave the way for a better understanding of what it is like to grow up gay or lesbian in the mountains, and foster the acceptance of future generations.

**Kate Black:** Several gaps and some problems emerged from our research methods. For example, class differences and perspectives appear in the interviews, yet we did not really probe our interviewees with questions about class. We did not address the subject of gender with the interviewees, but we did extract gender differences from the material. Several people brought up the categories of "butch" and "fem" for lesbians and "butch" and "queen" for gay men and these need to be explored further. For example, one gay man said, "People [he means gay men] in rural areas of Kentucky and North Carolina tend to be queenier. It is like they try to mesh with the stereotype of gay people more than people in larger cities who feel free to emulate other things" (7 1993). The statement possibly provides a window into class and gender differences, roles (both chosen and prescribed), internalized homophobia, varying notions about power and resistance, and, maybe, rural and urban dissonance.

Even with the additional voluminous work that this research requires, begs really, the stories of these lesbians and gay men growing up in Appalachia are important for their own sake. Each person we interviewed, in his or her own way, contributes to the spirit conveyed by that favorite Queer Nation chant, "We're here, we're queer, we're fabulous, get used to it."

Finally for me as a lesbian researcher, doing this work was often very emotional and, at times, painful. After all, the struggles of the lesbian and gay participants were not really any different from my own. But there was another potent theme in all the stories: desire. Together, the pain and the desire seemed to produce this incredible resistance to the ever-lurking and pressing homophobia and heterosexism. I think I finally understand, in a very rooted way, Foucault's statement, "Where there is power, there is resistance."

## *Note*

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Note: "Gaydar" is a "sixth sense" many gay people have developed and is a pun on the word "radar."

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2. 1993. Female, forty-five years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 27 October.
3. 1994. Male, thirty-seven years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 23 January.
4. 1994. Female, twenty-one years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 15 February.
5. 1993. Female, twenty-eight years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 12 August.
6. 1993. Female, forty-three years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 19 October.
7. 1993. Male, twenty-eight years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 15 December.
8. 1993. Male, twenty years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 10 December.
9. 1993. Male, twenty-three years old. Interview with authors. Lexington, Ky., 14 September.

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# **“You’ve Got to Get the Music in Your Feet:” Old-Time Dancing in African American and European American Communities in Southwest Virginia**

**Susan Eike Spalding**

Old-time square dancing and footwork dancing, variously known as flatfooting or clogging, have, since Cecil Sharp’s visit to the Central Appalachian region, been perceived as purely Anglo-Saxon dance forms. However, Sharp himself describes movement and musical attributes with African sources, such as the backbeat, but never mentions African American Appalachians performing the music or dancing (Cantwell 1984, 130-131). Bascom Lamar Lunsford collected music and probably observed dancing among African Americans in the Asheville, North Carolina area, but never presented African American performers at his Asheville Dance and Folk Festival (Whisnant 1979-80). In living memory old-time dancing has, at least in Southwest Virginia, been popular among both African Americans and European Americans. Presently, old-time dancing is a regular entertainment in only a few communities of each ethnic group.

This paper considers factors contributing to the continuity of the square dance in one European American square-dance community in Fancy Gap, Virginia, and one African American square-dance commu-



nity outside of Martinsville, Virginia. I use the term "dance community" to refer to people drawn together for the dancing. The group in each case is interest-based rather than geographically-based. Though most dancers live near each other, all members of the geographical community are not involved, and some dancers come from outside the immediate area.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from their ethnicity, the two communities, which are only about an hour's drive apart, are demographically similar, being primarily composed of working individuals with an attachment to the land and to the agrarian lifestyle in which they grew up. Many work in furniture or textile factories, in sawmills, or in small businesses, and keep a small farm or large garden on the side. As the city of Martinsville has grown, the rural areas surrounding it have become more suburbanized. Near Fancy Gap several large manufacturing towns such as Fries and Galax provided entertainment during the first half of the century, but in recent years many plants have closed and the towns have become smaller, leaving the area more rural.

In both cases, old-time dancing grows out of the local neighborhood and involves a network of interlocking families. In looking at the dancing of these two communities, the stylistic and structural similarities suggest adherence to cultural values that cross ethnic lines. In fact, it would be easy to identify many of Loyal Jones's Appalachian values embodied in the dancing of both communities (1973).<sup>2</sup> The differences in style and structure suggest two variations on regional culture, one African American and one European American.

In the European American community of Fancy Gap, square dancing has become increasingly popular during the last quarter century, and now weekly dances draw as many as three hundred people of all ages. In an African American community near Martinsville, the form remains a passion for a small group, but fewer and fewer have participated so that today it exists as an occasional, spontaneous, home- and family-based recreation.

Examination of the reasons for these changes has implications for the study of the continuity and evolution of traditional cultural expression in general, and Appalachian traditions in particular. The line of analysis presented here moves from specific features of the dancing in each community to its immediate context, and finally to the influence of national trends upon local choices.

My work is predicated upon the concept that in movement, particularly structured movement such as dance, a group enacts beliefs about itself. This concept is related to Allen Batteau's assertion that "the logic of Appalachian culture is a logic of underlying structures, or paradigms. These structures are shared understandings, embodied in social arrangements" (Batteau, 1979-80, 18). Batteau refers to large organizational

structures such as kinship networks and neighborhoods. One might also look at square dancing as a micro-social arrangement because it is an organizational structure in which a group of people chooses ways to define itself in space and to establish relations among its members. Square dancing can be seen as enacting a community's idealized vision of its structure, what the role of the individual should be within that community, and how the community should relate to the individual. Analysis of the movement is the core of this examination. In the description which follows, it becomes apparent that in Martinsville the dance seems to exist to support the individual, while in Fancy Gap the individual seems to dance in order to reinforce the community. These facts may impact upon the contracting of the former and the growth of the latter dance community.

### **The Dancing Described<sup>3</sup>**

As it appears today, old-time dancing has developed over the course of three centuries, as dancers have made choices from available movement vocabularies—European, African, and Native American—and have included elements of popular dance forms such as the Charleston (Spalding 1993). The dancing of both African Americans and European Americans shares formal and stylistic elements, with some distinctive variations, and may have evolved in part through mutual influence (Szwed and Marks 1988).

At both Fancy Gap and Martinsville, old-time square dancing consists of a circle for any number of couples (Johnson and Spalding 1990; Lornell 1979). The middle portion of the dance incorporates patterns for two couples dancing together. For each community, the center of the circle is very important, but in different ways. Improvisational footwork, which in both cases is intimately connected with the music, continues throughout the square dance. The style is similar: dancers keep their feet very close to the floor, close together and directly under the body, with minimal leg gestures. The dancer is reserved, keeping the torso almost vertical with no visible movement of shoulders, and letting the arms swing easily by the sides. Knees bend and stretch resiliently on every beat.<sup>4</sup>

In Martinsville's African American square dance, dancers maintain the shape of the circle throughout, with individual solos and interaction of couples and sets of four taking place in the center.<sup>5</sup> The dancers in the circle pat their hands and move their feet continuously while others dance in the center. The most important part of the dance is the solo in the center, called "Choose Your Partner," after which the soloist picks someone of the opposite sex to dance with in the center of the circle. The partner swing lasts as much as thirty-two counts, and is almost equal in intensity to the "Choose Your Partner" solo. Each square dance includes

the same two-couple set, "Change Partners," in which men and women take hands and pass around each other in a figure eight, and then swing the opposite partner.

In the European American square-dance community of Fancy Gap, after the initial circle, all couples join in sets of four for the "main dance," often diving into the center of the circle to find others to dance with. They sacrifice the shape of the circle for maximum interaction. They choose different partners for almost every one of the eight square dances in an evening. The partner swing, a fluid transitional four-count movement, leads from the end of one four-person pattern into the beginning of the next. The four-person pattern is the most important part of the dance, the main dance. Several are performed in an evening, but only once during each square dance, repeated many times, each time with a new couple. "Georgia Alabam," similar to Martinsville's "Change Partners," is the favorite. Others include "Chase the Squirrel," "Lady Round the Lady," and "The Golden Gate." The end of the square dance is characterized by two or more large group patterns. For example, the entire group may parade down the floor in ranks of two, four, and eight, weave around each other in snakelike patterns, or loop around the space in giant figure eights, single file or with a partner.

Why has the Fancy Gap dance community grown while the Martinsville dance community has diminished, despite demographic similarities and shared stylistic and structural elements in the dancing?<sup>6</sup> To attribute the difference strictly to social and economic disparities due to ethnicity is too facile.

I believe that the answer lies in part in characteristics of both the dancing and the dance event,<sup>7</sup> in the strength of the supporting institution, and in the expectations of the communities influenced by regional and national trends. My examination is informed by the work of two sociologists: Wendy Griswold and Michael Schudson. Schudson in particular offers a scheme for determining the potency of a cultural object—in this case, old-time square dancing—examining retrievability, institutional retention, resonance, rhetorical force, and resolution.<sup>8</sup>

## **Martinsville**

In the African American community near Martinsville, square dancing has been retrievable in homes within an interlocking network of families. Now one family in particular—headed by fiddler Leonard Bowles and his wife, dancer Naomi Bowles—serves as the retaining institution and carries the tradition. Those who square dance grew up in the country. Some continue to live outside of town on small farms, although the city has grown to the point that its boundaries almost touch the Bowles's property. The community had its own lodge halls and club

houses, and occasionally held square dances in those locations, but this never became a regular practice. The single exception was Martinsville's Black Fiddler's Convention, hosted annually by Doctor Dana Baldwin from 1928 to 1945, which included old-time dancing (*Virginia Traditions* 1978). By contrast, three hours west of Martinsville, in the Coalfields of Southwest Virginia, square dancing was regularly held in African American schools as recently as the 1940s (Kincaid and Kincaid 1992). This was not the case in the Martinsville area or in the Blue Ridge where square dancing and old-time music have continued to be home- and family-based entertainment in African American communities (Lewis and O'Donnell 1990, 178). Though economic disparity may play a role in this circumstance, I feel that the definition of square dancing as a private, family, and community-centered event also has an impact.

According to Leonard Bowles, square dancing in the home was "in full bloom" in the 1960s. With the assistance of the Blue Ridge Institute, members of their dance community performed at the National Folklife Festival and elsewhere in the late 1970s, but in recent years square dancing has become rarer, occurring today only at occasional family get-togethers (Bowles and Bowles 1992).

The rhetorical force which draws people back to the dancing results from two things: the footwork, of which Naomi Bowles says, "You can *feel* the music *within* your feet" (Bowles and Bowles 1992), and the solo in the center of the circle, called "Choose Your Partner," which serves as competition with other dancers in terms of skill, and also as display to attract a partner of the opposite sex. Leonard Bowles points to the solo in the center as the most distinctive feature of this square dance, making it "*altogether* different" from European American square dancing. The circle contains and witnesses both individual virtuosity and partner interaction. The resolution of the dancing is the idealized social arrangement which establishes community support of the individual and the couple.

As is the case throughout Southwest Virginia, many young people have moved away from the community and established families and professional lives. When they come home, they frequently initiate dancing with its individual footwork in the circle, and the Bowles's grown son instructs his students in square dancing in the school where he teaches. However, because young adults are not a large part of the dance community, the construction of the couple within the supportive community circle no longer has the importance it once did.

For the Martinsville dance community, old-time square dancing resonates with the tradition of cooperation and individuality which pervades the agrarian lifestyle of the region as described by Ron Eller (1982). Discussion of the dancing is always surrounded by descriptions of older ways of farming and communal work such as quilting and corn-

shucking. Into the 1940s, square dances here served the function of rent parties (though they were not so-called) with a different family claiming each weekend and charging money for refreshments as a way of supplementing income. The community thus supported the couple through the dance event as well as in the dance itself.

The dance event no longer provides the opportunity for community material support of individual families, but its structure carries some of the same individual-community interaction. Improvisational footwork is encouraged and said to be important to good dancing, but it must never disrupt the rhythm and interaction of the whole group. Even the virtuoso solo must not "run on too long," according to caller Ernest Brooks. He describes the importance of everyone working cooperatively together for the success of the dance (Brooks 1992).

Community support for the individual and the individual's responsibility to the community resonate with other aspects of their traditions. However, the dancing's rural cooperative heritage may have resulted in a certain negative resonance, causing the square dance to wane, since many African Americans in the region attribute lower status to "country," and higher status to "city." Mr. Bowles makes reference to people moving to town and leaving square dancing behind.

### **Fancy Gap**

The European American Fancy Gap dance event is eminently retrievable. Old-time dancing moved permanently from the home to public venues such as stores and lodge halls in the 1950s. One particular dance event has been held every Friday night since 1971, drawing 300 or more people weekly. Its reputation has spread beyond the local community, and people travel up to an hour to attend. Newcomers are readily welcomed, and regulars are pleased to teach the dancing. It is easy to find and easy to learn.

The retaining institution is the Fancy Gap elementary school and its PTA. The school is literally (geographically) and figuratively the center of the community. The event is organized by Charlotte Bevil, the daughter of a caller, and member of a generations-old dancing family. An important outcome of this dance event is fundraising for the PTA. By paying admission to the dance event, individuals support the future of the community through its children. In the Fancy Gap area, no dance event run for private gain has enjoyed longevity of more than a year or two, while this one has endured for 23 years (Bevil 1989).

Two structural features provide the rhetorical force which keeps people coming back. The community as a whole defines itself in space in many different ways, as spirals, figure eights surrounding the cafeteria, and arches for the others to go under. The square dancing demonstrates that the community provides ever-changing but familiar patterns

through which the individual can move fluidly and with confidence. Improvisational footwork is encouraged throughout, as long as it does not disrupt the group rhythm. Calvin Cole describes the footwork by saying, "you just pat a tune with your feet" (Cole 1989).

The other significant feature contributing to rhetorical force of the dancing is that the square dance is organized to ensure interaction among all individuals. In the four-person patterns, called "the main dance," each couple dances with each other pair, never joining the same couple twice. Each group of four establishes its own pace, independently of the many others who are doing the same pattern at the same time. Calvin Cole used to say, "I like to go, like the music, like to dance, like the people—like to grab first one and then the other" (Cole 1989).

All the couples dive into the center of the circle to find another pair to dance with, dissolving the circle. The implication is that interaction is more important than maintaining a visible structure in space, and more important than having witnesses to the interaction. Each individual, as a member of a couple, dances curving paths around each other individual in the group, making sure to dance with as many other individuals as possible during the course of the dance. The success of the dance relies on each individual being responsive to each other individual nearby, since the pace and spacing is established cooperatively through non-verbal cues. The resolution of the square dance comes from the individual's contribution to the weaving and re-weaving of the bonds of the community, never becoming the focal point of the group as a unit.

The current dance event at Fancy Gap resonates with the perceived cooperative agrarian past, having grown out of the practice of wagon-training. During the 1960s, with salaried jobs providing disposable income and leisure time, people in many Central Appalachian communities joined together in groups to ride their farm horses and wagons from one location to another. For up to a week, these wagon trains would travel by day and camp at night, often at a school ground, where the PTA might provide food and old-time music and dancing. The Carroll County Wagon Train typically concluded its annual week-long trip at Fancy Gap Elementary School. Because of the success of this event, in 1971, the PTA instituted year-round dances (Bunn and Bunn 1989). Through its association with the wagon train, old-time dancing connects with the agrarian traditions of the area.

### **Remote Experience/National Trends**

Remote experience may also have had significant impact on the growth of the one and the decline of the other square dance. National trends reflected and reinforced certain aspects of, and expectations concerning, old-time music and dancing, while contradicting others, influencing the growth of the forms in one community and their near

demise in another.

During the 1960s the War on Poverty created two populations in the public mind: the poor white Appalachian, and the poor African American urban dweller. While European American Appalachians became stereotyped as subsistence farmers, African American Appalachians were largely ignored by the War on Poverty (Turner and Cabbell 1985). Around this same time, the folk revival movement took root, drawing public attention to older styles of music and dance. African American music was cast as Blues, overlooking string band traditions and square dancing, which were stereotyped as European American Appalachian (Zwigoff 1991). David Whisnant documents the exclusion of African American performers and audience members from the White Top Festival (1983). The nationally known Galax Old-time Fiddlers Convention has never included African Americans, according to Leonard Bowles, though African American fiddlers are in the region. He expresses disappointment that local African American guitarists received the attention of music collectors, and fiddlers did not, because the guitarists fit the collectors' preconceived image. In his book, *Blacks, Whites and Blues*, Tony Russell corroborates Mr. Bowles's experience. Documenting the ways in which the recording industry affected folk traditions, he says, "blues played a less dominant role among Blacks than recordings suggest" (Russell 1970, 25). Local European American old-time musicians and dancers were encouraged by the folk revival movement while local African American old-time musicians and dancers were discouraged.

In 1971, in the climate of the folk revival, the Fancy Gap dance began as a regular event. It employed local old-time musicians, rather than revivalists, and attracted local dancers. However, the emerging national interest in old-time music and dancing reinforced the local preferences. The principal of Fancy Gap Elementary School proudly displays a 1978 publication of the Smithsonian Institution which includes descriptions of a square dance at Fancy Gap.

Also during this period, the Black Culture and Black Power Movements were growing, focusing on urban experience and defining the African roots of that culture. African American old-time fiddlers and square dancers found themselves "doubly invisible" as Edward Cabbell says, reflected in images of neither Appalachian culture nor African American culture (Arnow 1986). Naomi Bowles identifies with the "country" or "country-Western" culture when she says that the Martinsville dancers, in preparation for their videotaping by the Blue Ridge Institute, made costumes so that they could "look like the square dancers on TV" (Bowles and Bowles 1992; Lornell 1979).

## Conclusion

By examining significant details of the square dancing and its

immediate context in each of these two Southwest Virginia communities, and by seeing these details in the light of national trends, it is possible to explain the growth of one dance community and the contraction of the other.

The Fancy Gap dance community has maintained itself because the resolution of the dance reinforces the bonds of community through the interaction of each dancer with all others and in support for the local school. It has grown because of the dance community's easy availability and the rhetorical force of the large group patterns and the main dance, both of which allow for the incorporation of more and more people. Additionally there was resonance through the wagon train with the local agrarian lifestyle intersecting with the national folklore revival. These factors may explain why old-time dancing has thrived here, while it occurs rarely in other European American communities.

Concerning the Martinsville dance community, one might ask two questions. Why has the circle become so small? And, why has the square dance continued to the present without the support of a retaining public institution such as a school? The circle has become smaller because the resolution in the support of the couple is no longer relevant with a dwindling youthful population. Also the resonance with a former agrarian way of life has worked against the circle. The sharing of financial burdens used to be an important outcome of the dance event, but today, families have become more financially independent of each other. As a result, the retaining institution, the kinship network, has dwindled to one family. The dance has remained private and home-based, not easily available to newcomers, and has further been made invisible by national images of African American culture. The Martinsville dance community continues at present, however, because of the rhetorical force of the footwork with the opportunity for individual expression supported by the community and because of the tenacity of the Bowles family as the retaining institution.

## *Notes*

<sup>1</sup>For further discussion of the concept of dance community, see Paul Tyler (1992, 1-7).

<sup>2</sup>Loyal Jones has identified the following as Appalachian values: individualism, self-reliance and pride; neighborliness and hospitality; family solidarity; personalism (relating well with others); love of place; modesty and being one's self; sense of beauty in which artistic expression is tied to functional necessities; sense of humor; religion; and patriotism (1973).

<sup>3</sup>In both cases, I have relied on interviews with dancers, callers, and musicians to guide me in highlighting significant features of the dancing.



<sup>4</sup> For comparison, old time dancing in the Coalfields of Southwest Virginia is characterized by stomping footwork, sideward-kicking leg gestures, sharp arm movements led by the elbows, torso tilted forward from the hip joint as much as forty-five degrees, and considerable shoulder mobility. It is almost exclusively a partner or solo dance, with square dancing being a rare occurrence.

<sup>5</sup> This matches the form of the Juba and of African American ring plays. See Jones and Hawes (1972).

<sup>6</sup> Neither continuity nor discontinuity is good or bad in itself. Both communities choose square dancing from among many other kinds of dancing such as ballroom, Western square, hiphop, swing. This study simply examines existing situations.

<sup>7</sup> The dance event is the occasion at which dancing occurs. It can be examined for structural, stylistic, and contextual details, separately or together with the dancing itself.

<sup>8</sup> Griswold offers a scheme for explanation of cultural objects such as old time dancing through specification of object, agent, time frame, local sensibility, and expectations influenced by proximate (direct) and remote (distant or second-hand) experience (1987). Schudson defines the following parameters: 1) Retrievability: the cultural object must reach a person and be available socially, economically, spatially, temporally. 2) Rhetorical Force: the cultural object must have the persuasive impact to make the individual mindful of the cultural object—something which attracts attention and causes people to want to participate repeatedly. 3) Resonance: the cultural object must connect with other aspects of the traditions of the society in which it occurs—belief systems, comfort zones, other arts. These connections may be with past and present aspects, and near and distant aspects. 4) Institutional Retention: the cultural object must be supported by a local institution such as a school or church, which preserves and passes on elements of culture. 5) Resolution: the cultural object gives direction for action, or in some cases contains the resolution within itself, as in the reading of a sacred text (1989).

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# Two Gardeners of Song: Exploiters or Preservers?

Linda Plaut and Lyn Wolz

Recent scholarship on the folksong revival in both Great Britain and the United States has emphasized the interventionist nature of the movement. A series of charges has been made against professional folklorists: that they exploited informants for their own gain, that they used an imagined age of innocence as an excuse to keep the lower classes in their place, and that they exploited folk melodies for scholarship or composition. While we recognize the harm done by many collectors, this paper examines the work of two women who represented folk music research at its best: Annabel Morris Buchanan (1888-1983) of Marion, Virginia, and Ann Geddes Gilchrist (1863-1954) of Lancaster, England.

One of the leading critics of folk intervention in this country is David Whisnant, who wrote extensively on Buchanan's work in *All That Is Native and Fine*. While Whisnant is careful to avoid blaming Buchanan for the racist excesses of the other leaders of the White Top Folk Festival, he does include her in the circle of city slickers who he feels manipulated the music of poorer rural folk for their own profit (Whisnant 1983).

Two books present criticism similar to Whisnant's but concern the folk revival in England. Georgina Boyes, in *The Imagined Village*, suggests that the English Folk Revival is in fact a construction of an idyllic past that never existed:

On the one hand, urban popular culture, its context and consumers, could be demonstrated to be inferior, because folk culture had such high aesthetic, academic, and historical connotations. Conversely, on the other hand, as a form of working-class expressive culture, folksong could also be presented as evidence of the artistic creativity of the proletariat. . . . From its earliest inception, what differentiates [the Folk Revival] from

earlier publication of songs and dances collected from the people is its directly interventionist nature. Folk song and dance are not to be transcribed for archival purposes or popular entertainment but used as an instrument to effect a cultural change (1993, 3-4).

In his book *Fakesong*, Dave Harker carries the arguments of Boyes and Whisnant into a specifically Marxist context. Noting that preservation of folk culture is encouraged by repressive governments in Eastern Europe, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Great Britain, he concludes that these states reinforce nationalism in an attempt to “fend off danger of the only power which can challenge them—international working-class solidarity” (1985, xi). While Harker does not specifically attack Gilchrist, concentrating on more famous figures such as Francis James Child and Cecil Sharp (1985, xiv), he makes his goals clear:

Even in a sane world, after the revolution, it will not be possible to take concepts such as “folksong” and “ballad” out to be shot. However, they stand a fair chance of being put on trial, and then being locked up, or subjected to a lengthy period of political re-education . . . there is no point in attempting . . . to rehabilitate such concepts. They are conceptual lumber, and they have to go (1985, xii).

Against such formidable opponents, then, we spring to the defense of our two gardeners of song.

It is all too easy to underestimate the contributions of Gilchrist and Buchanan to folk music research. Gilchrist, in remote Lancaster, was never as visible as the London folklorists, and she did not leave major manuscripts or published books as Cecil Sharp did, but between 1906 and 1952 she contributed more articles and annotations to the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* than any other single member. As Margaret Dean-Smith pointed out, “a very great deal of Anne Gilchrist’s genius—her incomparable knowledge of melody—found expression in a vast correspondence rather than in published work” (1955, 218). Cecil Sharp, Lucy Broadwood, and John Masefield are only a few of those who deferred to Gilchrist’s expertise in British folk song.

Buchanan, in addition to doing the lion’s share of the work of organizing the White Top Folk Festival in southwestern Virginia from 1931 to 1936, gathered together almost a thousand folk songs, tunes, and variants for the National Federation of Music Clubs’ American Music Project. These items were donated to the Archive of Folk Music at the Library of Congress in the early 1960s. Buchanan is similar to Gilchrist in that much of her stature as a folklorist does not depend on published works, though she did have one book and several articles published during the active part of her career. The main influence Buchanan had,

however, was through her correspondence with other folklorists and through the contacts she made with classical musicians, folk musicians, composers, conductors, teachers, music club women, and publishers during the years of the White Top Folk Festival and the Virginia State Choral Festival. She was the catalyst for many a project in her efforts to bring together her two worlds—the worlds of folk music and classical music (Wolz 1983).

Annabel Morris Buchanan was a composer whose involvement with folk music transformed her career. While studying the work of English folklorist Cecil Sharp, she discovered that he had adapted his modal classification of Appalachian folk songs from a system developed by collector-scholar Ann Geddes Gilchrist. In the early 1930s, the two women commenced a long and productive correspondence.

Buchanan, the daughter of a minister, heard folk hymns as a child but soon began studying classical music. Specializing in piano and composition, she received a certificate from Landon Conservatory in Dallas, Texas, at the age of eighteen. The young woman married and moved to Marion, Virginia, where she became active in a variety of organizations, including gardening and music clubs. As a gardener, she transformed “three acres full of poison ivy and tin cans and wild blackberry vines” into a flower-filled paradise (Buchanan 1935, 13). As a musician, she quickly moved into positions of leadership in local, state, and regional branches of the American Federation of Music Clubs (Wolz 1983, 4).

It was as president of the Virginia federation that she first met Richmond pianist and composer John Powell. In a 1928 letter to Powell, Buchanan wrote, “I am working hard now on the state chorus and music in Virginia’s rural schools. . . . P.S. I’ve written two new songs” (Powell Papers 12 October 1928). The combination of organizational and creative work is a constant theme in her letters.

At the time she met Powell, Buchanan was already a successful composer. Her songs had been published by G. Schirmer and Carl Fischer, and several had been performed by singers with national reputations (Wolz 1983, 2), but her style was based entirely on the European art song. Powell’s interest in Anglo-American folk music introduced her to a new field of melodic sources as well as the study of folk rhythms and modes. The two became frequent correspondents and Buchanan often submitted songs or sketches to Powell for criticism. In an undated letter, Buchanan writes, “I let composition go absolutely for folk study, for months, and then only a little, in folk style as far as possible, and I don’t believe I could ever write a poor tune again, after being so steeped in these things” (Powell Papers n.d.).

Meanwhile, a young woman of Scottish ancestry had grown up in

Lancashire, England. A 1935 interview with Margaret Dean-Smith describes Anne Gilchrist's childhood:

[She lived] . . . outside Lancaster in a spacious Victorian house high above the estuary of the Lune. Its windows looked westwards to the lakeland mountains, the sea, and the countryside where as a girl she had walked, sailed and fished, and exchanged plants with the future Regius Professor of Botany. . . . (1957-58, 43).

Anne Gilchrist was a distant cousin of the Scottish minister Neil Livingstone, who was responsible for the reprint in 1864 of the *Great Scottish Psalter* of 1635 (Dean-Smith 1957-58, 43). Although she had classical music training, including a thorough exposure to the "obsolete ecclesiastical modes" (Dean-Smith 1957-58, 44), Gilchrist traced her interest in folk music to a much earlier time:

I might claim that my interest in folk-song began while I was still illiterate (which some collectors seem to think an advantage in a folk-singer). Our mother came of a musical family and sang often in the nursery, generally with the latest baby on her knee. . . . At the age of six I began to store folk tunes in my mind, beginning with singing-games learnt during Christmas revels in our grandfather's house in Cheshire. . . . Later, I became familiar with old Scotch traditional songs sung by my father and mother. One favourite of my father's had a fascinating refrain of "Sing yarrady airrum . . ." sung with a strong "burr." This was, I think, the first tune I ever noted from a singer. But by this time, having made the acquaintance of the modern major and minor modes, I lost for the time being my early innocence of ear, falling foul of the unsharpened seventh of my father's tune, and suggesting that the note should surely be sharp, not natural. "No, no, no," he replied, with a vigorous shake of the head, adhering with conviction to his "flattened" note. . . . So I conceded the "flat seventh," and learnt to note tunes as I heard them—"My version, right or wrong!" (Gilchrist 1942, 62).

One of the fruitful products of the Buchanan-Gilchrist correspondence was a refinement of the system of modal scales used to transcribe folk tunes. Gilchrist, who collected extensively from native singers, observed a similarity between their "irregular" pitch patterns and the modes used in notating Medieval chant. She codified this transcription system (Gilchrist 1911) and Cecil Sharp made adaptations to it. While this whole approach to folk music may be perceived as Eurocentric, it enabled collectors to transcribe tunes into notation which could be performed by classically-trained musicians. Boyes objects that "songs

with tunes in the 'ancient church modes' were privileged and treated as representative rather than unusual forms," while more recent songs were rejected (Boyes 1993, 14), but both Buchanan and Gilchrist found many examples of modal tunes in their collecting. If they were guilty of being less than statistically fair to the non-modal variety, this is likely to be an example of a taste for the exotic rather than egregious flaunting of class privilege.

Buchanan, building on the work of Gilchrist and Sharp, developed her own system of analysis and presented it to the first International Congress of the American Musicological Society in New York in 1939. Called "A Neutral Mode," Buchanan's system acknowledged that certain tones in the melodies sung by native musicians did not fit even the church modes, but were "neutral" or halfway-between (for example) B-flat and B-natural (Buchanan 1944).

Buchanan found that one of the greatest changes the "folk work" made in her life was that it changed the way she composed original music. In *Folk Hymns of America* (1938), she collected fifty melodies—many of which she had learned from her parents—and published them with simple harmonizations. She also made more elaborate settings of folk tunes for mixed chorus and these works were sung by amateur and professional groups throughout the U.S. Lastly, she composed original works which utilized folk modes and rhythms.

Whisnant speaks critically of collectors who exploit folk tunes as raw material for original creative work (1983, 236). Buchanan, on the other hand, was quite clear that she was operating within a Western tradition in which Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Bartok, and countless others had used *their* national folk heritage in the same way. In her opening statement as National Federation of Music Clubs chair of the American Music Project, she said, "Great composers of all nationalities have turned to their native folk music as the inspiration for some of their greatest works, being familiar with it from their cradles. Ours, which includes some of the most beautiful in the world, has been neglected. . . ." (Buchanan Papers). Rather than exploitative, Buchanan saw herself as atoning for the sins of omission of other American composers who showed insufficient respect for their own national heritage.

Boyes, Harker, and Whisnant all criticize folklorists for exploiting their informants rather than assisting their sometimes desperate financial conditions. All three authors find examples of the crassest insensitivity on the part of the leading collectors. Boyes, for example, says:

But proposing to fellow members of the Folk Song Society, in agreeable West End surroundings, that the only way to avoid racial catastrophe was to collect folksongs was one thing.



Actually journeying to rural areas to knock on unknown cottage doors with a request that the inhabitants sing to you, proved to hold fewer attractions (1993, 41).

Harker provides a much more damning example. In describing the comfortable "field work" of Sabine Baring-Gould, a vicar and country gentleman who invited the "peasants" to come to his house just long enough to sing a few songs, he quotes this story: "I had in old Hard. Then and there I obtained from him a further crop of ballads. That was the last reaping, for in the ensuing bitter frost the aged man was found dead, frozen on a heap of stones by the roadside" (Harker 1985, 159). Harker reacts in justifiable rage:

"I had in old Hard." It's as though the crippled ex-stone-breaker, living with his wife on four pounds a year, was rather like a dumb animal in Baring-Gould's eyes, or even the inanimate natural force, the "field," which that image of "reaping" a "crop" implies. What the tenant or landowner had to do, presumably was to extract all that was left of Hard's cultural property, and then let the forces of nature do their worst, while parsons and gentlefolk sat round their blazing fires, enjoying the "treasure" that had been preserved for their own kind (Harker 1985, 159).

Once again, Gilchrist and Buchanan provide examples to counter these accusations. Both journeyed into the countryside, relishing a chance to experience a sense of adventure which was seldom available to women in their societies. In a letter written to Gilchrist on 4 September 1936, Buchanan described her feelings:

I am enchanted at the opportunity this summer and fall to run around some in the mountains, having grown fond of the joys of "hitch-hiking"! I have had a MARVELOUS time gypsying and vagabonding through the summer in three states, maybe sleeping in some mountain cabin or the car. It was such an adventure, I shall never forget it. And I collected such splendid material (Buchanan Papers).

Gilchrist loved to tell of "[an] old sailor at Southport, from whom I took down shanties and sea songs in a dark little cave of a shop . . . encrusted with dog-collars and tools and gadgets of all kinds . . . always ready to search his memory for songs" (Gilchrist 1942, 62).

Gilchrist described herself as being "on friendly terms with all my singers," and she told of her own failure to get a song she badly wanted from a man who was said to sing it frequently to his wife. Although the wife and Gilchrist tried valiantly to persuade him to sing, "he sat as mute as an oyster, though not without an 'I-could-an-I-would' twinkle in

his eye" (Gilchrist 1942, 63).

Buchanan invited folk musicians to her home and established warm, caring relationships with them. On one occasion, she wrote to John Powell that a child named Virginia Russell (the daughter of one of Buchanan's informants) had died; the doll Buchanan had given her at Christmas was in her arms. "It seems so strange that I started out as a collector, and am gradually finding myself adopted as an intimate family friend by first one, then another of these folk musician families" (Powell Papers 9 January 1932). She often went on intuition to find her informants: "... a man just came to the door to sell blackberries. I sized him up instantly, and carried on my maidenly advances toward him, with the result that he's coming tomorrow with four gallons of berries, a guitar, and some folk songs" (Powell Papers 6 August 1931).<sup>1</sup>

Buchanan argued vehemently with other White Top organizers that the musicians deserved better pay and better working conditions, and she often employed or found employment for folk musicians. One of her favorites was a singer named Council Cruise. On 5 January 1932, she wrote to John Powell that Council Cruise was in jail, and several other "folk" were ill and in trouble. In February, Cruise was released, and Buchanan tried to find suitable work for him. "How could he settle down in a factory after running a still? And personally, I'd lots rather he'd run his still. . . . We can't make him over" (Powell Papers 7 February 1932).



In an article published in *Better Homes & Gardens* in 1935, Buchanan describes the earlier failures and later successes of her gardening ventures that culminates in a vision of Eden:

A wild garden and rock garden have been planted at the rear, with myrtle-carpeted stepping-stones along a woodland trail in the "Forest of Arden," thru hemlock, rhododendron, dogwood, redbuds, ferns, and many plants and trees brought in from the mountains. . . . Here may birds sing and children play and elders read and dream (1935, 15).

Intervention, yes; destruction, no. Plants may be taken from the forest and continue to grow in *both* forest and city. So may songs. In several ways, Buchanan and Gilchrist stand in strong contrast to the exploiters whom Whisnant, Boyes, and Harker criticize: they did not make large personal profits from their "folk work," they got to know and appreciate their informants as individual human beings, and they grew up in households which honored the oral transmission of old songs. To complete the analogy: while large-scale, for-profit farming can represent a very destructive intervention in nature, few would criticize the efforts of those whose flower gardens preserve little havens of beauty for family

and community. Let us not fail to appreciate those whose collections of old songs preserve a treasure which can be enjoyed by all.

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## *Note*

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that the humorous "seduction" depicted here represents a reversal of the gendered convention described by Debora Kodish. In the Kodish encounter, a male folklorist depicts himself as the fairy-tale hero who awakens the silent female informant to song (Kodish, 1993, 43).

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# **Fabric and Fiction: The Clinch Valley Blanket Mills, 1890-1950**

**Kathleen Curtis Wilson**

The Clinch Valley Blanket Mills, owned and operated by C.E. Goodwin and his four sons, was a model of clever marketing, crafts revival, and quality workmanship for sixty years. The mill influenced how people outside the Southern Appalachians would perceive mountain crafts and mountain craftsmen for nearly one hundred years. In order to understand the reason for this influence and its impact, we must look at the marketing techniques used to sell the mill's products and what was happening to the handweaver's market during the same period.

## **The Development of the Clinch Valley Blanket Mills**

Charles Eugene Goodwin followed in the weaving trade he learned from his English father, James, who came to the United States about 1837. Charles Eugene, called C.E., ran mills for absentee owners or for his own business in Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia. In the late 1880s, Goodwin moved to Cedar Bluff, Virginia from West Virginia to run the Scott Bros. Klondyke Cotton and Woolen Mill. The Cedar Bluff Woolen Mill, a carding wool business, was also located in Cedar Bluff.

Over a twenty-five year period, Goodwin either leased or managed two mills in Cedar Bluff, the Cedar Bluff Woolen Mill, owned by the McGuire family, and the Klondyke Cotton and Woolen Mill, founded by Thomas Scott and later purchased by members of the McGuire family. Goodwin finally purchased both mills about 1916 and changed the names to Clinch Valley Blanket Mills. When the smaller mill burned in

1924, Goodwin moved all his equipment to the larger facility up the Clinch River and expanded his operation.<sup>1</sup>

Mechanization increased production in the weaving industry at the turn of the century. Goodwin used local labor and materials to weave on looms powered by water, steam, and electricity. Over the years, the mill employed from thirty to 120 workers to weave colonial reproduction coverlets and blankets, using factory spun cotton, commercial dyes, and huge quantities of wool processed in-house (Dickenson and Dickenson 1993).

The “blanket mill,” as it was locally called, was an important industry in the small town of Cedar Bluff and for Tazewell County. Nearly every citizen had a family member who either worked for the mill, did the hand-finish work at home, traded or sold wool to the mill, or supplied coal to keep the furnaces going. Local women used “side cut” scraps from the mill blankets to weave throw rugs on hand looms in their homes. Wool was gathered in horse- or ox-drawn wagons in the early days. Later, a truck pulled the “wool wagon” to farms in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

Elderly men and women still remember the disagreeable job of shearing dead sheep in the field or the excitement of riding on the farm wagon to the mill with a load of wool. Frequently, they recall their own employment running the “mule,” quillers, or looms, inspecting army blankets, or shipping finished goods. The “mule” was a mechanism mounted on a frame that traversed back and forth, keeping proper tension on carded wool when wound onto bobbins. What color the mill was dyeing wool that day was easily ascertained by the color of the river.

When prices were low, farmers traded all their wool for coverlets and blankets to furnish bedding to the extended family or to put away for the next generation. Even in good times, many families used a little wool in trade. The woven goods were not only functional and warm, but beautiful as well. Without the “trade,” most families could not have afforded such luxurious items. The mill-woven items became prized wedding gifts and baby presents, and were especially desirable since the giver usually had some association with the weaver or worker involved in its production. These coverlets and blankets still remain in families as treasured keepsakes passed from generation to generation.

Goodwin, and later his sons, negotiated government contracts for the mill to weave thousands of all wool army blankets to ship overseas during both world wars. They wove the linings for army sleeping bags, puttees (gaiters) for World War I soldiers, and blankets for the British Royal Navy (Pierce 1941). When John Goodwin, C.E.’s youngest son, enlisted in 1914, he was considered too valuable to the production of army blankets and the government sent him home after basic training. The mill employed many wives and daughters of service men stationed

away from home. In a region that offered little employment opportunity for women, the income earned made farm payments and put food on the table. The mill ran three shifts a day to meet government demands and employed additional women from outside the community. Local citizens earned extra money by boarding young women from West Virginia and Kentucky who came to work in the mill (Whitt 1993).

In peace time, the mill wove colonial coverlets, lap robes for horse drawn buggies and automobiles, table linens, and baby blankets. C. E. and John Goodwin went into the community to borrow handwoven coverlets and pattern drafts to copy. According to their advertising, Goodwin produced the first seamless coverlets, appealing to northern buyers who didn't like that "unsightly" seam down the middle (Robertson 1949). The end result was a product of quality and durability.

To sell these household goods, Goodwin avoided revealing his factory production capacity and focused on selling a concept of tradition. While using modern equipment of the day, Goodwin marketed the nostalgic idea of old women spinning and weaving in remote mountain cabins. He put together "the story" of his silk weaving background in England, simple mountain people, and faithful adherence to the handwoven coverlets of a bygone era. Coverlets, blankets, and table linens were sold through sales agents in Marion, Virginia, Bloomfield, Illinois, and other states. The mill also published a catalog for direct mail order sales. Goodwin watched home decorating trends outside the region and dyed some goods the fashionable colors of mint green, pink, gold, aqua, and lavender.

### **The Handicraft Revival and Impact on Marketing**

For most of the 1800s, handcrafted household items were a necessity and the pride of mountain people. However, by 1890, many craft skills had been put aside and forgotten as factory items became available and more desirable. About 1893 the stirrings of a handicraft revival began in Berea, Kentucky and Asheville, North Carolina. The newly elected president of Berea College, Dr. William Goodell Frost, noticed the interesting woven bedcoverings used in many cabins. He determined that the college could preserve the handwork of an earlier period and find new markets for idle mountain looms. With few old timers to teach the new generation, it took a while to renew the art of coverlet weaving. In 1896 homespun fairs were started where competition and comparison to the old coverlets inspired young students.

More than thirty years after the first revival of southern highlands handicrafts, the crafts centers in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky united to improve their crafts and to use the marketing advantage of a cooperative effort. Weaving was, and still is, an important part of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, founded in 1929 (Barker

1991). The guild established a market for unique handmade mountain products that were inexpensive and reminiscent of pioneer times. These crafts appealed to city dwellers who knew little about rural mountain life. Northern housewives were anxious to purchase coverlets similar to the ones woven in New England fifty years earlier. By the late 1920s, there was a growing demand for all kinds of woven and handmade products.

In 1930 Mrs. Riley Fox, Mrs. Finley Mast, and Mrs. Owenby traveled by train to Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and Chicago on a tour of major department stores. All three were native mountain women with long family weaving traditions. Mrs. Mast was famous throughout the entire Appalachian region for her coverlets made for the Woodrow Wilson White House. The trip, sponsored by Frank E. Rudd of Louisville, Kentucky, manufacturer of rayon and cotton coverlets, was undertaken to acquaint northern women with Southern Appalachian coverlet weaving (Calloway 1930). The women traveled with an ancient hand loom, spinning wheels, handmade furniture, and coverlets to illustrate various patterns. In the stores they set up a display representing a "typical" mountain cabin. Dressed in homespun and weaving in their stocking feet, these women gave the impression that handwoven coverlets were still abundantly available throughout the Southern Appalachians. Mrs. Owenby explained the work being woven on the loom to the enthralled crowd that gathered at every stop. The onlookers perceived that mountain life was still as simple and backward as it had been a hundred years before and they were determined to furnish their homes with this quaint handmade weaving.

During this same time period, the Clinch Valley Blanket Mills was weaving approximately fifty coverlets and blankets per day (Dickenson and Dickenson 1993). (The best handweaver can only weave one or two coverlets per month.) One of the mill's best accounts was Rosemont, an early handmade mountain crafts cottage industry in Marion, Virginia. Rosemont was widely known for its hand-hooked rugs, hand-tied bed canopies, and woven coverlets. Everything sold under the Rosemont label was purchased or commissioned in the surrounding communities. Their weaving was purchased from the Clinch Valley Blanket Mills. Rosemont's mail order booklet did not say the coverlets were woven on hand looms; instead they addressed the issue of hand weaving versus factory weaving as follows:

They [coverlets] are not made in a modern factory but in the original old mill in the mountains to which the farmers still bring their wool for exchange and from which the mountain women take the coverlets home for hemming and fringe-making. Our looms are not the ordinary jacquard looms of the textile



mills but are specially adapted to our process (Rosemont brochure).

Another Rosemont booklet states:

The spinning, dyeing, and weaving are all done in a primitive mountain community where living conditions are simple. Every purchaser of one of our Colonial Coverlets may be sure, not only of having an exact and exquisite reproduction of early American weaving, but also of helping the mountain people to help themselves (Rosemont brochure).

While sales markets were being established by the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, which only allowed hand weavers to join, the actual production of guild members was not large enough to fill the demand. The Clinch Valley Blanket Mills' vast production capacity, coupled with its quality and authentic 19th century designs, allowed the company to sell thousands of coverlets and blankets to customers who thought they were buying handwoven items. While this marketing sold the product, it also influenced the outside world's perception of the people in Southwest Virginia. At a time when industries were using the latest equipment and inventions to speed production, it was thought that the Virginia mountain craftsmen were using old fashioned methods. The myth of simple mountain people living simple lives and making simple crafts with simple mountain tools was a successful marketing technique that resulted in a negative stereotype which Southwest Virginians argue against to this day.

Much has been published to expand public awareness of the 1895 Arts and Crafts Movement and subsequent revivals in Southern Appalachia. The Clinch Valley Blanket Mills never joined the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild because it used power looms. Nonetheless, the company affiliated itself so closely with this movement that it was perceived to be a part of it. With innate marketing skills, the Goodwin family successfully sold its products in distinctly different markets. The Goodwins influenced the attitude toward Virginia mountain weaving from 1890 to 1950 and for many years beyond. At the same time, the Clinch Valley Blanket Mills played an important role in the social and economic life of Cedar Bluff and the surrounding counties.

The old production mill is long silent. The records are scattered and only the foundation of the original mill remains to photograph; but across the country, families still possess the woven fabrics to weave the story of an early mountain industry.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> As this paper goes to print, I have uncovered letters that shed new light on the ownership of the mills. More analysis is needed to completely unravel the whole story of ownership versus management. What is known is that two generations of Goodwin men were running textile mills in Cedar Bluff, Virginia, Cumberland Gap and Harriman, Tennessee, and Campbellsville, Kentucky. What is not known is if C.E. Goodwin owned any mill prior to 1916, when he purchased both mills in Cedar Bluff.

For many years there has been a good deal of confusion about the ownership of the two woolen mills located on the Clinch River. Local people refer to “the blanket mill,” “the woolen mill,” or “the Goodwin mill” whenever they mention the weaving that was done in Cedar Bluff. The Goodwin name was linked to the mills after 1890, but it wasn’t until 1916 that Goodwin purchased both the Klondyke Cotton and Woolen Mill and the Cedar Bluff Woolen Mill. At that time both mills were owned by the McGuire family. Goodwin renamed the entire operation the Clinch Valley Blanket Mills. He used this name on his letterhead, publicity, and mail-order booklets, but locally this name was rarely used or remembered.

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# **Before Albion's Seed: Other Influences on Appalachian Culture**

**Donald Edward Davis**

Scholars studying Appalachia largely ignore the three hundred years of human history that preceded the eighteenth century frontier. Most who have written about the settlement of the southern mountains have not recognized the important contributions that the Mississippians, Cherokees, and even Spanish explorers made to the history of the region. While specific European skills and Old World land-use practices were certainly important to the settlement and social development of the region, the Europeans settled lands with a long history of human habitation. The Appalachian environment coupled with the cultural legacy already in place created new and difficult challenges for the settlers. In the southern mountains, culture evolved in relationship to both social and environmental influences.

## **Major Periods of Cultural Change**

The process of culture formation and change is an extremely complex phenomenon. In the Southern Appalachians, no fewer than three major periods of cultural change occurred prior to 1820.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish started the process during the sixteenth century, introducing important new crops and initiating trade in furs and other goods (Crosby 1972, 35-63; Waselkov 1989, 117-120, Hann 1988, 182-183, 239). The Spanish also brought deadly microbes into the region, destroying a large percentage of the native Mississippian population. The social chaos that resulted forced native peoples to migrate both to and from the area, weakening cultural traditions and practices. Within a century, pre-Columbian Mississippian life had all but vanished from the Appalachian South

(Smith 1987, 55-60; Smith 1990, 1-7; Hudson 1990, 52-60; Hudson and Chaves 1994).

The second period of social and environmental change occurred after the English and French initiated trade with the Cherokees during the early part of the eighteenth century. Initially the Cherokees saw the fur trade as beneficial to their people and participation in it was not necessarily discouraged. As game became scarce, the Cherokees became more and more dependent on English goods for their sustenance. Debts were often paid in large tracts of land, which further decreased access to wild game.

Fur traders became the first Europeans to actively live among the Cherokees and their presence in the region had a profound influence on the lives of the natives (Logan 1859; Rothrock 1929; Goodwin 1977; McLoughlin 1986; Hatley 1993). Fur traders married Cherokee women and introduced cattle and hogs into the surrounding countryside (Bays 1991). When the French encouraged Cherokee warriors to fight against the British in the 1760s, English armies retaliated by destroying Cherokee dwellings and grain supplies. As a result of these losses, natives found it harder and harder to maintain their traditional cultural practices.

White settlement of the region represents the third and final era of cultural (as well as ecological) change in the southern mountains for this period. As early as 1745, Europeans cleared and settled land in what is today Southwest Virginia. However, Cherokee control of the mountains made it difficult for settlers to push deeper into the area until after the Revolutionary War. The first settlers to the region were mostly of English, Scotch-Irish, or German extraction, and they brought a variety of European grasses, plants, and livestock with them. Many introduced plants (particularly weeds and grasses) flourished in the rich soils of the mountain river valleys, overtaking some indigenous species. As timber was cut for fences, dwellings, and pasture, more and more openings appeared in the mountain forest. By 1820 only the most remote mountain coves and ridge tops had not been settled by whites.

Because Cherokees continued to occupy the region throughout the frontier period, Native American influence on mountain culture remained significant. When many Old World crops proved unproductive in mountain soils, settlers began cultivating native Cherokee varieties. Corn, pumpkins, squashes, gourds, beans, and melons became popular and necessary substitutes among the white settlers, as did Cherokee preservation methods. Hunting and fishing techniques were also routinely borrowed from the natives. Pioneer women adopted Cherokee use of medicinal herbs and soon were making home remedies in a similar manner. Likewise, Cherokee women learned how to milk dairy cows, tend poultry flocks, and spin and weave European fabrics. Some of the

invading plants (such as upland cresses) brought by the settlers also became popular with Cherokees. It is clear that culture change after European contact went both ways.

The three seemingly distinct historical periods did not occur in isolation of each other. Peaches, watermelons, and sweet potatoes, all Spanish-introduced crops of the seventeenth century, became central to the diets of the Cherokees and later became important to the first European settlers (Williams 1984, 425-427; Davis 1993, 160-175, 211-212). The building of weir-dam fish traps, a common subsistence practice of the Mississippians, was taken up by the Cherokees and later by the pioneer settlers. In fact, the early Cherokees inherited a considerable amount of material culture from the Mississippians, including wattle and daub building construction and the making of cane mats and baskets. Cherokees preferred sites formerly inhabited by the Mississippian Indians and settlers regularly sought out lands farmed by the Cherokees.

### **Settlement Patterns**

Rivers played an important role in the early settlement history of the region. The Mississippians, Cherokees, and the eighteenth-century white settlers all chose to live along rivers, largely because river bottoms have the most productive and easily cultivated soils. Rivers provided transportation networks for canoes and keelboats and water power for grist- and sawmills. Site selection obviously changed from century to century, since each social group preferred some locations over others. During the sixteenth century, Mississippians preferred to settle along the largest rivers of the region, so the majority of villages were found either in the Ridge and Valley or Blue Ridge provinces of Southern Appalachia. Archaeologist Roy Dickens recorded the existence of more than three hundred Mississippian sites in the Blue Ridge province of western North Carolina, all along sizable mountain streams (Dickens 1978, 13-17).<sup>2</sup> On the Cumberland Plateau, Mississippian occupation was somewhat less prevalent, although sizable villages were present along the Cumberland and Kanawha rivers. The largest Mississippian townships, however, were those located in East Tennessee and northern Georgia, in the southern end of the mountain region. Here the soils of the Ridge and Valley were extremely suited for corn and bean production and proximity to the slower-moving rivers provided convenient access to fish, mussels, and waterfowl (Smith 1990). Because the Mississippian settlement pattern was generally organized around a large central chiefdom, distances between villages were often very large.

The Spanish displacement of the Mississippians through warfare and the spread of disease greatly altered the social organization and settlement pattern of the region. The Cherokees, who moved into the

area, occupied former Mississippian village sites and established new ones as well. Cherokee social organization was less centralized and their numerous villages, much smaller. The Cherokees spread out linearly along rivers, generally close to one another. As populations increased during the seventeenth century, more and more river systems became occupied by the Cherokees. On the Tuckaseegee river in western North Carolina, for example, five Cherokee towns existed along a single thirty-mile stretch of the river. Cherokees also burned the woods, leaving numerous clearings and adjoining canebrakes that provided important browse for livestock.

The fur traders and first frontier settlers gravitated toward Cherokee villages in the level, rich river bottomlands. Because the bottomlands of the largest rivers were the first areas occupied, smaller streams became the preferred destination of later arrivals (Wilms 1991, 2-8). Gristmills, used to grind grain into meal and flour, were erected along these creeks and rivers and served as important centers of commercial activity. Those who could not find or afford land along streams built homesteads near small springs or, as a last resort, settled away from water on hillsides and ridge tops.

### **The Role of External Forces**

Prior to the sixteenth century, the Appalachian South remained largely outside the world economic system. From the sixteenth century on, population pressures, warfare, land scarcity, and external economic relations all had a major impact on the settlement of the region. The desire for gold and silver brought the Spanish to the area, the fur trade brought the fur trader, and many European settlers came seeking refuge from servile living conditions in the Old World. By the early seventeenth century the native population was feeling the effects of an expanding global economy. There was trading in furs, albeit largely through middlemen to the south, some Old World crops from Europe and Africa had been introduced into the mountains, and thousands of natives had perished from introduced diseases. As the Mississippian case demonstrates, world commerce and trade profoundly affected the culture and ecology of the region as early as the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the Cherokees were drawn even deeper into world economic relations. By the early 1700s, Charleston, South Carolina, had become an important center of trade, exporting skins, ginseng, and other commodities from the region to the European continent. Hunting deer had long been part of Cherokee traditional culture and the killing of surplus animals for the fur trade did not immediately bring significant changes to their lives. The Cherokee bartered furs for weapons, tools, and other Europeans goods and the rate of exchange was largely controlled by the natives. In the 1720s, as

competition for furs increased, traders made permanent settlements in the area, enticing the Cherokees into acquiring more skins by offering them such items as durable fabrics, colorful glass beads, and alcohol. Because of their proximity to Charleston, Cherokees living in the southern Blue Ridge were the first to engage in the trade networks, and also the first to experience the resulting ecological changes.

As their participation in the fur trade increased, Cherokees began to lose skills such as the making of bows and arrows and the crafting of stone celts and arrowheads; they became increasingly dependent on European weapons and ammunition (which could only be obtained by killing more deer). As deer became harder to find locally, the Indians had to make longer and longer excursions into the upland forests in order to supply their own villages with meat and skins. In 1760, after relations between the Cherokees and the English—the primary purchaser of southern Appalachian furs—became strained, warfare broke out among the two groups. The British were largely successful in defeating the Cherokees, destroying their most valuable orchards, granaries, and croplands. The British victory insured the acquisition of thousands of acres of prime Cherokee hunting land (Williams 1927, 96; Williams 1928, 235-236; Mooney 1900, 41; Schroedl and Ross 1984, 12).

The extraction of natural resources for European markets did not end with white settlement. Fur trappers and long hunters, in direct competition with the Cherokees, traded elk, buffalo, deer, and beaver skins to exporters from Charleston, and Augusta and Savannah, Georgia. Frontier settlers also collected and sold ginseng, which was shipped to France and then China. Because overland travel across the mountain region was often difficult, river settlements became important outposts for commercial trade. On the Cumberland Plateau, products were regularly sent down the Cumberland River to shipping ports as far away as New Orleans. From there, goods from the southern mountains might find their way to the Caribbean, Spain, England, France, or even Asia.

### **Process of Culture Change**

While external economic forces were certainly powerful in shaping the subsistence culture of the region, they do not tell us everything about the process of culture change. For the Cherokees, cultural change was both proactive and reactive. When Overhill Cherokees became political allies of the French in the early 1760s, they were partially directing the course of world trade (Williams 1927; Corkran 1962, 225). Because certain Cherokee factions always resented European presence in the region, there was also conflict. However, despite devastating military defeats, the Cherokees retained agency in governing their affairs. Cherokee women—devoted agriculturalists, basket makers, and weavers of native fabrics—maintain many of these cultural traditions even today,



well into the twentieth century. Appalachia was, in many ways, a “middle ground,” a place historian Richard White has described as “between cultures, peoples, and in between empires . . . the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation and the background of Indian defeat and retreat” (White 1991, x).

From my own perspective, culture change in Appalachia was a syncretic process. No single culture group avoided absorbing aspects of the other. The Spanish armies of De Soto and Pardo survived excursions into the Appalachian backcountry by eating Indian corn, a New World crop that quickly became the agricultural mainstay of the Iberian peninsula (Hudson 1990; Milanich and Hudson 1993). The Cherokees eventually adopted the practice of cattle-raising, and the white European borrowed a great number of subsistence techniques from the Cherokees. Unlike the one-dimensional acculturation theories of David Hackett Fischer and others (Fischer 1990; Greene 1988), cultural syncretism suggests that all culture groups, not just dominant ones, share in the process of cultural change.<sup>4</sup>

Proponents of syncretism focus attention almost entirely on social relationships; that is, the cultural dynamics that occur between two or more groups. But often the physical environment remains the fulcrum upon which cultural identity rests. As powerful as they may have been, members of colonizing groups generally found themselves strangers in a strange land. Having little knowledge of their new surroundings, they relied heavily on the ecological knowledge of native peoples, which, in turn, changed the nature of the relationship between the two groups. Cultural stability of the native population was dependent on a balanced relationship with the environment (Goodwin 1977; McLoughlin 1986, 33-91). When the balance changed due to introduced demands, dependency on other groups increased. Ecological forces and cultural dynamics are equally important to the culture change equation—in the southern mountains culture did not arise in a social vacuum, it was the product of both human and natural history.

Before European contact the living landscape of the region was less a resource to be consumed than a matrix for sustaining individual and community life. Pre-contact Mississippians and Cherokees certainly found ways of changing the local landscape, but their subsistence methods did not, in the long view, vastly alter the ecology of the region. This is not to say they didn't have an impact on the environment but that, more accurately, the impact differed from that of the Europeans. Human beings have been altering the environment in the southern mountains for the last 10,000 years. It is the *magnitude* of the interaction that ultimately affects the degree and rate of environmental change.

In the final analysis, culture must be viewed as a product of both social and environmental forces. By emphasizing the environment in our

cultural investigation, a more complex story of social evolution and environmental change is told. Culture is never simply the outcome of social *and* environmental forces: it is, more accurately, the product of complex *interactions* between the two. When humans and the environment came together in the southern mountains, both influenced the other.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Certainly there were human beings and Native American cultures (e.g. Woodland and Archaic) in the Southern Appalachians prior to 1500. However, because of the absence of historical data prior to the sixteenth century, and the nature and scope of cultural and environmental change that occurred over the next three hundred years, this paper focuses solely on the post-Columbian era.

<sup>2</sup> Dickens defines the Mississippian period occurring between 1000 to 1650 A.D. The extremely large number of sites is partly explained by settlement movement over this extended time period. Mississippian refers not to a single cultural group, but to a variety of cultures sharing certain characteristics.

<sup>3</sup> The incorporation of southern Appalachia into the world economic system has produced a lively debate among scholars in the field of Appalachian studies. Stemming from the work of Immanuel Wallerstein (1989) and others, proponents of "world-systems theory" argue that the region contributed greatly to the development of the world economy prior to its settlement by white Europeans. For a synopsis of this view, see Baker (1991) and Stotik (1990).

<sup>4</sup> Not a formal school, advocates of syncretism belong to a variety of disciplines and credit a number of thinkers in their scholarly work. One of the most frequently cited is Clifford (1988), an ethnologist who has studied cultural change in both primitive and modern societies. Other relevant works promoting syncretic models of cultural evolution include Billington (1977), Axtell (1985), Otto (1989), and White (1991).

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# Connecting Appalachia: A Survey of Recent Work in Early American History with Reference to Southern Appalachia

Tom Costa

In his seminal study *Appalachia on Our Mind*, Henry Shapiro describes the creation of a myth of Appalachian isolation and “otherness” initially based on the writings of local color journalists who “discovered” the area in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Their depictions of the mountains as an isolated, rural backwater were reinforced by the attentions of Protestant home missionaries who invaded the region, shifting their focus from blacks to spiritually impoverished white mountain folk in order not to alienate other white southerners. In the view of these do-gooders, Appalachian “peculiarity” became the basis for attempts at “denominational uplift,” despite the fact that many of the mountaineers were already Christians (Shapiro 1978, 4, 60).

Ronald Eller, in *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, modifies Shapiro’s thesis by showing that Appalachian economic stagnation, traditionally seen as a historical and geographical development which contrasts with the massive changes wrought by industrialization after the 1870s, was in reality a result of the rapid and uneven pace of the late nineteenth-century economic change (Eller 1982, xx, 6).

Not surprisingly, both Shapiro and Eller see the crucial period in the history of Appalachia as the period of industrialization, from roughly 1870 to the 1920s, when the arrival of the railroad and coal industries

had their greatest impact. There is no doubt that the effects of industrialization form a significant theme in Appalachian history. By shifting the focus to the roots of mountain history in the colonial and antebellum periods, however, recent works have added significantly to Shapiro's and Eller's work by placing Appalachia in the broader context of American and southern frontier and rural history. Echoing an earlier call for connecting Appalachia to the mainstream of history, these revisions significantly alter the traditional picture of Appalachia as a backwater, bypassed by the main forces of history (Wilhelm 1977).

There is no synthesis of pre-industrial Appalachian history, which may be part of the problem. Older histories tend to view mountaineers as peripheral to the main story—an isolated, ornery folk who wanted nothing better than to be left alone. According to these versions, these dirt farmers or herdsmen, imbued with precapitalist values, worked marginal lands no one else wanted. Through choice and/or circumstance, they engaged in a subsistence agriculture by which they barely managed to scratch out a living. According to this thesis, coal mining brought capital, jobs, even civilization to the hillbilly (Gray 1933, 884, 867; Owsley 1942, 24, 26-7; Weise 1991).

Recent works provide a valuable corrective to the picture of antebellum southern Appalachia as a static, impoverished region. Antebellum southern mountaineers practiced a more diversified agriculture than once was assumed. According to Tyrel G. Moore, Eastern Kentucky farmers participated in a range of economic pursuits which augmented their farming, including milling and tanning, as well as locally extracting salt, iron, and coal. In an important work on antebellum North Carolina highlanders, John Inscoe has described "a thriving, productive, and even a progressive society" on the eve of the Civil War—certainly not the poor dirt farmers of the older image. In these works, southern Appalachia is placed in the context of antebellum rural America as a whole (Moore 1991; Inscoe 1989, 11-12).

On the other hand, the counterpart to the hillbilly dirt farmer stereotype—the sturdy, self-sufficient yeoman who lived in an idyllic Eden later spoiled by industrialization—also proves problematic. Paul Salstrom contributes to the scholarly debate over the self-sufficient versus entrepreneurial models of rural America by shifting the emphasis to agricultural production as a causative factor in the move from acquisitiveness to a more cautious self-sufficiency. Salstrom's Kentucky farmers have always been entrepreneurial. He turns the rural *mentalités* argument on its head by pointing out that Appalachia's declining agriculture actually dates from the 1840s and is the key factor in transforming the mountain farmer from a middling entrepreneurial producer to a cautious, self-sufficient grower (Salstrom 1991).

Salstrom's article forms part of a larger debate over the mental

world of rural Americans. Were eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century farmers essentially communal, self-sufficient, and anti-capitalist? Or were they aggressive, profit-maximizing proto-capitalists? Much of the recent work dealing with Appalachia indicates that the latter view is probably closer to the truth. In a work dealing with the Shenandoah Valley, for example, Robert D. Mitchell attacks the self-sufficiency thesis head on by pointing out that the American westward movement was from the beginning spurred by a commercial ideology. By extension, Appalachian settlers, like the other frontiersmen, headed west with one eye on the profit potential ahead of them and the other on from where they had come (Mitchell 1977, 8).<sup>1</sup>

Livestock, in particular, often proved a valuable source of income for preindustrial mountain farmers. Frank Owsley's classic stages of settlement of the southwest, with herdsmen followed by farmers, is misleading. Livestock *and* crops were raised by mountain farmers. Moore's Kentuckians herded cattle, sheep, and swine in significant numbers. In colonial western Pennsylvania and Virginia, cattle formed an important part of the mixed farming that was characteristic of the region. For some eighteenth-century Shenandoah Valley farmers, cattle raising was the primary occupation. Valley cattlemen were an aristocracy comparable to the low country tobacco planters (Owsley 1942, 45-46; Moore 1991, 226-7, 233; McMaster 1991, 130).

Such economic diversification led to increasing social stratification, but it was access to land which provides the key factor in the formation of frontier elites. Recent studies of land acquisition in early American history may prove especially rewarding to the student of early Appalachia. In colonial times, the key figure in controlling access to land was the county surveyor. For colonial Augusta County, Virginia, for example, Turk McClesky detects a pattern of settling land in which a small, interconnected local elite, acting on their own behalf or as agents for provincial leaders, monopolized the best land (McClesky 1990; Hughes 1979, 89, 170; Hofstra 1991; Hofstra 1990, 427-29).

Such a pattern of elite accumulation of land may have persisted into the ostensibly more democratic nineteenth century. Mary Beth Pudup demonstrates the formation of a native social, political, and economic elite in three counties in southeastern Kentucky beginning in the 1820s. Land ownership proved an important criterion for ascent. This group also based its prominence on establishing political and economic networks with the rest of Kentucky (Pudup 1991).

The importance of kin in facilitating the formation of local elites, enhancing ideas of community in backcountry regions, and tying mountain people to the wider world is the subject of a number of recent works. For example, Warren Hofstra describes the importance of family, ethnicity, and religion in fostering a sense of community in the northern



Shenandoah Valley settlement of Opequon, even for the increasing numbers who departed for Kentucky and Tennessee in the years following the Revolution (Hofstra 1990, 423-448).

In Southwest Virginia, the kinship connections crucial in gaining the powerful Preston family local dominance helped them capture state office in the early national period. Later, a branch of the same family, residents of isolated Burkes Garden in Tazewell County, Virginia, also used family connections in a vigorous system of local and external exchange. Kin networks were as important in preindustrial Appalachia as they were elsewhere in colonial and antebellum rural America (Terry 1992; Mann 1992; Dunn 1988).

Family provides one important theme in recent works on colonial and antebellum Appalachia; ethnicity represents another. The stereotype of a predominantly Scotch-Irish Southern mountain frontier is addressed by several authors. While the Scotch-Irish element is significant, the term itself is problematic. It is important to distinguish the differences among Irish Presbyterians of Scottish origin (Ulster Scots, the main ethnic group called Scotch-Irish), Irish Catholics, Presbyterians from Wales, Scotland, or northern England, and Irish Anglicans of English origin, all emigrants from the margins of Britain to American backwoods (Mitchell 1991, 9-10; Blethen and Wood 1991, 150-1; Keller 1991, 72; Nobles 1989, 651-2; Berthoff 1986, 525-30; Jones 1991, 286-7).

Identifying the ethnic backgrounds of Appalachian settlers is one thing; attributing cultural characteristics to their ethnicity is another. Older accounts posit a group of characteristics as the "frontier type"—hardy, independent, aggressive, often violent. In examining the background of the "Scotch-Irish" immigrants to Southern Appalachia, Kenneth Keller asserts that it was only with the growth of nativism and anti-Catholicism in the 1840s and 1850s that a real sense of Scotch-Irish ethnicity began to appear among western mountaineers. Of all immigrant groups to the frontier, the Scotch-Irish adapted most readily to the dominant English cultural norm: they were the most rapidly assimilated of any of the frontier ethnics (Keller 1991, 83-4; Jones 1991, 311-13).

Furthermore, an examination of the career of one Western North Carolina merchant, James Patton, "a key figure in linking the small farms of the southern mountains to the urban markets both north and south," emphasizes the advanced social standing of the Ulster immigrants in that region (Blethen and Wood 1991, 152-3). Even Hofstra's ethnic Scotch-Irish of Opequon traded with Germans, English, and native Virginians (Hofstra 1990, 424).

Politically, mountain stereotypes also give way to a more diversified picture of early national and antebellum Appalachian public life. In Revolutionary Southwest Virginia, for example, a more complex reading of local politics replaces the traditional view that mountaineers were

unanimous in their support for independence. While many of the area's patriots marched under Colonel William Campbell of Abingdon to defeat the British at King's Mountain, South Carolina, in 1780, local loyalists created such turmoil that patriot leaders reported that perhaps as much as half of the area's population had British sympathies (Selby 1988, 215-6, 219; Evans 1985, 179-212).

Following the Revolution, Van Beck Hall has found that, in contrast to older notions of a socially, economically, and politically retarded area, Appalachian Virginia between 1790 and 1830 "generated political programs that attempted to reform the state while using its power to implement economic development and social change. . . ." Hall proposes the existence of "two Appalachias": one, rural and isolated farming counties; the other, vital and town-centered, with newspapers, banks, and nascent industry. This latter area produced politicians who led efforts for political and social reform and economic development which proved an anathema to easterners. Hall's mountain politicians generally remained suspicious of the slave-owning, planter-dominated east (Hall 1991, 166, 172).

On the other hand, John Inscoe's examination of antebellum North Carolina mountaineers provides a revision to the common view that they were unionist, and in the process corrects a series of misconceptions regarding southern mountaineers. Although the inhabitants of Boone and Buncombe counties owned fewer slaves than their eastern counterparts, their defense of the southern way of life was no less profound. Inscoe's Carolinians inhabited Hall's town-centered Appalachia, with the additional advantage of a growing tourist industry (Inscoe 1989, 25-58). Taken together, the two works reveal an Appalachia which defies political stereotyping.

These recent examinations of preindustrial Appalachia form part of the larger question of the meaning of the frontier in American history. Frederick Jackson Turner's picture of independent and egalitarian settlers is largely discredited. Yet what replaces Turner's frontier is not clear.

One concept which may prove more fruitful than Turner's tired frontier thesis is the concept of antebellum Southern Appalachia as a borderlands rather than a frontier. According to this model, western settlers migrated to an increasingly ragged periphery. Using such a concept, several themes emerge from the above works which have been made explicit in three recent attempts at a grand synthesis of early American history.

Geography offers one key to gaining a more balanced perspective on Appalachian history, as many of the above-mentioned works attest. The starting point in any definition of Appalachia must be geography. The first volume of D.W. Meinig's ambitious geo-historical approach to

American history emphasizes geographic character, structure, and system, which he defines as the "the human creation of places and of networks of relationships among them" (Meinig 1986, xv).

Another fruitful method lies in an examination of the folks involved in the settlement process itself. This process is called "peopling" by Bernard Bailyn in his recent synthesis. One of the most significant developments of the late colonial and early national period is population growth. According to the most recent estimates, in the years from 1750 to 1775 the population of North America grew from 1,300,000 to 2,300,000. The bulk of this increase, coming as it does after 1760, "became so great that it constituted a social force in itself. . ." This explains much of American history, including perhaps even the American Revolution (Bailyn 1986(a); 1986(b), 7; Meinig 1986, 288).

David Hackett Fischer stresses the persistence of cultural factors as the organizing theme in the first volume of his ambitious survey of American history. Fischer sets forth four regions of Britain whose distinctive cultural traits migrated to four separate regions of North America. Fischer's book has been attacked, however, for a variety of reasons, one of which is his essentially static view of culture. For all of his prodigious research, his thesis of cultural persistence in Southern Appalachia remains problematic (Fischer 1989; "Forum" 1991; Landsman 1991, 253-259; "Culture Wars" 1992).

Reviewing these three syntheses, one theme emerges which may prove productive in dealing with the history of the Appalachian South. The concept of networking represents a combination of the approaches of Meinig, Bailyn, and Fischer—geography, peopling, and culture.

According to Darrett and Anita Rutman, networking involves a number of preconceptions. First is "the assumption that people inevitably associate in groups." Associations have some order; they come together at what the Rutmans call "nodal points." Geography, in both a negative and positive sense—presenting limits as well as opportunities—is also a vital element in forming associations. Physical topography is important; so too is social topography—associations are hierarchical, involving power relationships. Finally, associations are observable, having limits and forming networks. An important outcome of using this approach is that we see how the communities under study are connected to the wider world (Rutman and Rutman 1984, 25-30).

How does networking apply to the history of early Appalachia? In Robert Mitchell's view, historians must "envision the Appalachian area as 'becoming,' as a place in process, defined both by its physical presence and by its mode and timing of pioneer settlement" (Mitchell 1991, 3). Using networking to see Appalachian history as a process can help reconcile seemingly disparate themes of geography, peopling, and degree of cultural persistence.

For example, Meinig clearly focuses on all of North America, including the mountains, as part of a wider Atlantic world. His geographical approach views the colonies as parts of a whole—the movement of goods, people, and ideas from metropolitan European centers, each with its hinterland, through Atlantic ports, across the ocean to colonial ports, to colonies, to frontier entrepôts, to outposts, and finally to Indian core lands. Meinig's schemata thus represents a network along which a spectrum of power relationships, interaction, and social character works itself out (Meinig 1986, 258-65).

Bailyn, too, emphasizes networking. His masterful analysis of the lists of emigrants from Britain during the years 1771-1773 demonstrates the dual nature of British migration to the New World during those years. A primarily individual, servant migration from the midlands and southern England through London combined with an overwhelmingly family-centered migration from northern Britain (Bailyn 1986(b), 201-3). Family connections in this case may have maintained cultural norms for a longer period in the southern backcountry than in areas where individuals settled as servants.

Fischer's work, focusing as it does on the near total retention of lifeways in the settlement process, proves more of a problem. Although his analysis of the British background to the settling of North America provides a wealth of detail, his examination of the transferral of culture to the backcountry is too rigid. The work is useful in its emphasis on the British background of the settlers, but provides a too static picture of the settlement process itself.

If modified, however, by a closer examination of the networks between Old and New World regions, Fischer's analysis can provide important insight. For example, his emphasis on one specific characteristic of the northern British borderlands, namely a propensity to violence, attracts much of the criticism of his book. Just how this propensity toward violence may have changed in the process of settling the southern mountains remains the crucial question which Fischer's approach tends to obscure. A recent article by Ned Landsman offers a more subtle thesis, maintaining that borderers' violence may have generated the commitment to civil order which characterized the Scottish Enlightenment. Such a commitment then transferred to America through a network of settlers from northern Britain (Landsman 1991, 258; Cunningham 1992; Waller 1992).

Applying the concept of networking to correct Fischer's emphasis on cultural persistence also serves to debunk the older view of the persistence of an ethnic Scotch-Irish "type" in Appalachia. As Maldwyn Jones points out, even if one accepts the distinctiveness of "Scotch-Irish" as a discrete group, by the time of the Revolution, except in the most isolated places, the Scotch-Irish on the American frontier had become largely

assimilated into an Anglo-American cultural framework (Jones 1991, 313).

The works discussed here repeatedly emphasize the value of networking as an approach to Appalachian history. There have been numerous connections between the inhabitants of Southern Appalachia and the wider world. Mann's inhabitants of Burkes Valley sought contacts with the outside world through a network of family and commercial connections (Mann 1992, 413). McClesky's colonial speculators acted in close cooperation with provincial leaders in Williamsburg, luring the large numbers of migrants which moved southward from Pennsylvania into the Shenandoah Valley (McClesky 1990, 485-6; Meinig 1986, 159-60). In the northern valley, Hofstra and Mitchell detect an integrated town-country "system" which developed as the area joined the wider commercializing trading system in the early nineteenth century (Hofstra and Mitchell 1993).

Inscoe's Western Carolinians, too, act "as parts of a larger whole." The Appalachia of Inscoe and Hall is a more complex region than any older picture of rural isolation. Mountain towns, "where the world got out . . . and where the world got in," as Inscoe so aptly quotes Thomas Wolfe, served as nodal points where news and institutions from the outside penetrated the mountain region (Inscoe 1989, 25-58).

Many questions remain. Religion as a network receives less attention than it deserves, although Hofstra makes some effort to include religion in his analysis of the Shenandoah Valley (Hofstra 1990, 423-448). The earliest networks of the region, among Native Americans and between Native Americans and European settlers, also warrant attention.

But such questions represent significant research opportunities. Ongoing work in the history of colonial and early national Southern Appalachia will continue to add to our knowledge of Appalachian networks. Eventually a synthesis of early Appalachian history will appear, connecting Appalachia with the mainstream of American history, and the bogey of Appalachian isolation and otherness will finally rest.

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## *Note*

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, however, that several historians, writing what has been labeled "the new rural history," dispute the entrepreneurial interpretation of American farmers. Their contributions lie beyond the scope of this essay, but see the introduction to *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation* (Hahn and Prude 1985) and "Theoretical Perspectives on the New Rural History:

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# Property, Gender, and the Sale of Mineral Rights in Pre-industrial Eastern Kentucky

Robert Weise

Before corporate coal mining introduced full-time wage labor into the area, Central Appalachia's farm economy functioned primarily within the context of individual households. While the rather extensive local timber industry brought a large percentage of the Appalachian population in direct contact with regional and national markets and with rationalized credit systems, farming continued to maintain household subsistence (Merrill 1977; Henretta 1978; Clark 1979; Clark 1990; Hofstra and Mitchell 1993). In Eastern Kentucky, deep generational and gender conflicts over the control of property divided households in the years before industrialization, and those intra-household divisions were entangled with extensive credit relationships formed with merchants and with other households. The opportunity to sell mineral rights to coal speculators in the late nineteenth century suddenly opened up new avenues to women and men for resolving both intra-household and inter-household conflicts. Eastern Kentucky's industrial development, then, dependent for its success on the sale of mineral rights, is linked not only to the colonial aspirations of outside mining corporations but also to gender relations within Appalachia's farming households (Eller 1982).

Landed property formed the base of pre-industrial Appalachia's farm economy. Consequently, control of that property defined power relationships and shaped the ways those relationships became reproduced in successive generations. Property owners, generally men, managed the transfer of real estate through deeds of sale and through inheritance.

While Kentucky law tried to protect some rights of married women and female descendants to property ownership, Appalachian cultural norms tended to privilege the power of men to control property over protections granted women by law. In Floyd County, Kentucky, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, men often sidestepped or disregarded women's legal property rights and preserved for men command over the productive resources of the county.

Until 1894, married women in Kentucky did not have legal powers over land or business transactions conducted by their husbands (Salmon 1986; Basch 1982). All such transactions, and the profits gained from them, belonged exclusively to husbands, and husbands had full rights to their wives' personal property and to the use and rents of whatever real estate their wives brought into the marriage. Nonetheless, Kentucky law did protect women's *ownership*, if not use and control, of their own landed property, and it gave women an interest in property accumulated during their marriages. Wives' own estates were free from liabilities their husbands incurred either before or during the marriage, and their estates could not be sold to satisfy their husbands' debts. Wives, furthermore, had to consent to and acknowledge any sale of land; a wife's refusal to sign a deed in front of a notary public invalidated the transaction. Wives could also, with the support of their husbands, petition the circuit court to be given the status of *feme sole*, to be considered in the eyes of the law an unmarried woman with full powers over all her real and personal property. Statutes enacted in 1894 eliminated the legal concept of *feme sole* by granting all women, married or single, full rights to property ownership and rights to conduct business independently from their husbands.

Kentucky laws upheld common law protections of widows and daughters by ensuring their share of the property left by husbands and fathers who died intestate. A widow received the customary one-third dower interest in land and a full interest in personal property for her use during her life. Upon her death, however, her dower descended to her husband's heirs. A widow, then, had full use of her dower, but she could not sell it or bequeath it. The 1894 laws gave husbands a one-third lifetime dower interest in their wives' estates, and gave both husbands and wives absolute control of one-half of the personal property. Daughters, before and after 1894, had as complete an interest in their fathers' estate as did their brothers. After court administrators determined the size and contents of the widow's dower, the rest of the estate went in equal shares to each of the children, male and female (Dembitz 1890; Bullock and Johnson 1873; Russell 1909). Pre-1894 inheritance law, then, codified some measure of independence for women by protecting their rights to ownership of separate property. Nonetheless, by prohibiting widows from disposing of their dowers as they saw fit, inheritance

law still upheld the principle of male control over household business.

Gender conventions in the Kentucky mountains placed men in positions of authority over women and over their children, creating what must be called a patriarchal hierarchy. At meals, women often waited on the men of the family before sitting at the table themselves; children labored under the strict discipline of their fathers; religious services had separate seating for men and women and restricted leadership positions to men alone. If those situations did not at all preclude genuinely loving relationships and did not signify Victorian submissiveness among wives, they did serve to underscore the power of husbands and fathers in the household and in the larger society (Caudill 1962; Mann 1993; Dorgan 1989; Tyson, Peacock, and Patterson 1988). That power generally meant that husbands, unaware of and unconcerned with the 1894 changes in property law, ran the business affairs of the household and expected their wives to acknowledge land deeds when necessary. One woman testified in 1912 that she knew nothing of the value of her farm or the timber on it because she had never investigated it, noting that "women are generally in the house, you know." When her husband sold the tract, he insisted she sign off on the deed even though she understood nothing of the document and knew none of her husband's plans, because "like all other women I always attend to my business in the house, and didn't pay any attention to them" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #5644, 22 January 1912). This woman took domesticity to an extreme that most Floyd County women did not share, yet her role was well within the gender norms of mountain culture.

Those norms defined the proper relations between husbands and wives in the household. When Floyd County marriages fell apart, the party suing for the divorce did so on the grounds either that the husband failed to provide adequately for his family or that the wife, by some lewd and lascivious behavior, proved herself unchaste. Petitions in divorce suits tended to copy the wording of the Kentucky statutes that set out the grounds for a legal divorce, making it difficult to determine whether Floyd Countians shared the same gender conceptions held in the rest of the state, or if they felt they had to phrase their complaints that way to obtain the divorce. Fortunately, the details of the suits do make clear what each party expected of the other in the marriage.

Women often pointed to habitual drunkenness or plain laziness as the cause of their husbands' inability to provide for their families' subsistence, and that failure was too often accompanied by severe abuse. One woman claimed that, although she was always "obedient, submissive, and kind" to her husband, he "cruelly, whipped beat and abused assaulted and injured . . . her with a large club." At the same time, her husband had "within the last few years wasted and extravagantly disposed of some twelve or thirteen hundred dollars without adding

anything to his property" and was now trying to dispose of the rest of it so his wife could not claim alimony or gain control of his estate. Another woman suffered similar violence from her husband, who refused to provide her with food and clothing. Her husband, witnesses said, "would not buy Clothing for her" and "would not work and support her . . . the People had to throw in provisions to keep her from Starving" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #4860, 31 December 1906; #4823, 8 October 1906, among many others). Gender divisions of labor, even in Appalachia's subsistence farming economy, were apparently sufficiently well drawn that a husband's failure to do his part threatened not only the household's use and control of property but also its ability to feed itself.

Either party could, and often did, accuse the other of adultery, most often occurring "on divers occasions and with divers persons." Men generally limited their complaints to adultery and abandonment, indicating that they expected their wives, in addition to their contributions to household subsistence, to provide them with a respectable home. Divorce suits based on adultery could get extremely ugly, especially since circuit and county courts accepted all manner of hearsay as evidence. Witnesses, both men and women, routinely testified as fact what was only neighborhood rumor and proffered to the court their opinions as to the moral character of one party or the other. One witness told the Court that "I have saw deft winking at men and squeezing mens feet and I have seen her Hug men I have seen her have vulgar talk to men . . . other than her husband." Another based her certainty as to a woman's unchastity on the grounds that "I have seen her knocking about with Zack Johnson[;] report says they have taken up together" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #2545, 20 September 1886; #1404, 15 January 1872; #2173, 6 September 1881; #2218, 31 August 1882). Suits all too often degenerated into a sordid set of assertions, counterassertions, threats, and bribery as women tried to justify their claims to alimony in land, while their husbands sought to establish grounds for not paying any alimony at all.

Divorce suits and accusations of male wastefulness were ways that Appalachian women contested male control of productive resources. Men tried to perpetuate their authority by passing control of property to their sons and sons-in-law. While most Floyd County wills written in the late nineteenth century merely specified which tracts of land would go to each child, son or daughter, some granted all land to the sons and gave personal property or cash to the daughters. None gave daughters any more land than they would have received had the bequeather died intestate, and only a few stipulated that the daughters' inheritance was to be free from the control of their husbands. One will insisted that daughters could sell their shares only to their brothers, who had no restrictions placed on their shares, and others gave daughters or sisters only a lifetime interest in their inheritances (Floyd County Will Book A

1812-1931).

Most Floyd County farmers left no wills at all and disposed of their property by deed instead. These deeds either did not go into effect until the grantor died, or else they specified that the grantee support the grantor and his wife on the property until their deaths. Deeds often went to sons alone, while others went directly to sons-in-law, under the assumption that daughters' welfare was served best by allowing their husbands full control of the households' resources (Floyd County Land Deed Books K:403-410; N:394).

Fathers' attempts to control the distribution of their property did not always succeed, especially where an unusually forceful daughter insisted on retaining the estate for herself. Sometime around 1880, Christopher Patton tried to draw up a will giving much of his land to his sons-in-law Micajer Spradlin and Abner Hackworth. Christopher's daughter Pheba, however, in the words of her sister Polly Spradlin (wife of Micajer), "got into a mighty fret" over Christopher's plans and compelled him to write a new will giving Pheba ownership of virtually the whole estate. Christopher "told [Pheba] she would have all & had got all and yet she was not satisfied, and that if she did not quit [illegible] over him so much, he was going to be taken away from there." Abner Hackworth further testified to Pheba's influence over her father. On the day Christopher wrote his new will, Hackworth went to his house.

"[I] stepped in the entry & the old woman [Pheba] stoped me & told me not to go in there they had the door bared against me . . . The evening before he died, he said that he did not have his business fixed up as he wanted it . . . Pheba rushed in the house and told him to hush Mouth that everything was fixed up right."

Hackworth concluded that "Pheba was the controller of everything so far as i know . . . I think she ruled over him in every thing, is my opinion" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #2649, 11 July 1887). Patriarchal authority had its limits, especially in the mountains where rugged living for both women and men mitigated against the idealization of the meek and domesticated woman.

A handful of women, then, did manage to gain control of household property, and some even became a part of Floyd County's small but influential group of merchants and speculators. Most businesswomen, however, achieved their position as extensions of their husbands, by supporting them in their businesses or by taking over the businesses after their husbands' deaths. Christina Hatcher, for example, took control of her husband's general store when he died in 1851 and ran it with aplomb until her own death 35 years later. Hatcher never remarried, a move which would have ended her mercantile career. Instead, she concentrated on building up the family fortune by buying and selling

several tracts of land and by extending store credit to neighboring farmers. Hatcher had no qualms about suing those farmers if they failed to repay their debts (Floyd Circuit Court Files #516, 8 December 1856; #688, 12 October 1858; #853, 19 November 1860; #970-#972, 17 November 1865; Floyd County Land Deed Books, esp. K:351, L:217)

Nannie J. Honaker worked alongside her husband in his mercantile and timber operations. Around 1900, Honaker bought up several pieces of property and secured a lease on ten acres on which to build a log yard and sawmills. She also made at least three timber contracts with her neighbors, buying from them over one thousand trees for under one dollar each. In 1906, Honaker bought up the holdings of the bankrupt Winston Lumber & Manufacturing Company of Louisville, and three years later, in a joint deed with her husband, she purchased mineral rights under a 43-acre tract (Floyd County Land Deed Books X:475, 4:282, 14:339, 17:155, 22:621). Arty Akers built on her husband's extensive landholdings after his death in 1870. Like Hatcher, Akers, though an uneducated farm woman, lent money to farmers throughout the county at interest, not hesitating to file suit when the need arose. When she died in 1900, Akers left her children sizable estates. She was, in the words of a neighbor, "a fine business woman, fine" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #4149, 22 August 1901).

Other women petitioned the Circuit Court to be granted the status of *feme sole*, allowing them to "use enjoy sell and convey for her own benefit any property . . . she may own or acquire free from the claims or debts of her husband and to make contracts, sue and be sued as a single woman and to trade in her own name". Mary L. Hatcher (only indirectly related to Christina Hatcher), supported by her husband, made such a petition in 1877 and from then on ran successful stores in at least two different locations (Floyd Circuit Court Files #1794, 17 March 1877).

More often than not, however, what may look like a woman's effort to secure property for herself or to conduct business outside the dominion of her husband was actually a ploy to protect the husband's property from being sold for unpaid debts. Creditors regularly complained to the courts that their debtors had fraudulently sold all their property to their wives in an effort to "cover up his property." Other creditors believed that *feme sole* petitions themselves smacked of fraud, and they delved into the personal affairs of their debtors to determine whether their wives actually were managing their property on their own. So even though Lydia Mayo received *feme sole* status from the court, creditors of her husband, Lewis, still tried to force the sale of real estate that was in her name. Lewis Mayo, they said, traded in livestock and cultivated the whole of the farm on his own and received the benefits from his labor, and therefore the property legally belonged to him. Neither his creditors nor the judge believed Mayo when he told them that he was only a hired

hand of his wife and that he turned all farm proceeds over to her in exchange for room and board (Floyd Circuit Court Files #1794, 17 March 1877; #1255, 13 February 1869; #2514, 1 April 1886; #1762, 25 April 1876; #1865, 25 April 1878; #1901, 4 December 1878). Only rarely was *feme sole* used as a mechanism to advance women's independence in the household. More often, those legal measures to protect women's property were manipulated to facilitate and safeguard men's business affairs, to perpetuate male control of household resources.

*Feme sole* was a legal device useful mostly to households directly involved in commercial activities and with direct connections to creditors. In those farming households operating on a basically subsistence basis, men used more straightforward means of maintaining their dominion over household affairs. Cultural assumptions of male authority gave men de facto control of all property and all property transactions, sometimes in conflict with the protections granted women by law. Although husbands' power over their wives' property was meant to benefit the household as a whole, men sometimes simply turned it toward their own pleasures, causing more than one woman to complain to the Circuit Court that her husband was "spending and making away with her property and . . . never has made any provision for her and her children for their support and maintenance" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #1810, 30 July 1877).

Wives' legal rights to real estate—their ownership of what they brought into the marriage and their interest in household transactions—fell victim to the real power of husbands, who commonly resorted to "fraud, threats, duress, and coercion" to gain their wives' legal assent to land sales. Women often signed deeds they did not understand and sometimes had their names forged to deeds; one woman signed a deed while delirious with a fever. "I had been sick," she said. "I was sick a long time. . . . They pulled me off the bed and made me acknowledge one deed, but after I come to myself I never acknowledged any more" (Floyd Circuit Court Files, #5413, 11 June 1910; #5644, 22 Dec. 1912).

Other men used force rather than deceit to obtain their wives' signatures. Anzie Hall claimed that her husband, "a very bad & dangerous man," threatened to kill her if she refused to sell the piece of property she inherited from her father. Hall's petition to the Circuit Court stated that:

at the time she signed the deed . . . her husband & two of his brothers was armed with guns & pistols and compeled her to sign the deed. She says that she cried and beged [sic] and . . . says that this was her own land that she did not intend to sell it . . . that all she did do was through fear of her life or greate bodily harm (Floyd Circuit Court Files #3447, 6 March 1894).



Another woman claimed that her husband threatened to abandon her if she did not go along with his plans to dispose of her property. Julia Frasure told the court that her husband sold her inheritance to a neighbor without her consent just before they left Kentucky for Texas. While in Texas, Frasure's husband coerced her into signing the deed to that sale, saying that he told her that if she did not sign it, "he would leave me there without any money or friends and I would have to get back home the best way I could" (Floyd Circuit Court Files #4055, 18 July 1900)

All these women tried to use the courts to protect the rights their husbands had violated, and there were certainly many more cases that went unreported. Occasionally, lawsuits did secure women's rights to property against the usurpations of husbands, fathers, or brothers. In one case, three sisters brought suit against their eight brothers for failing to pay the sisters' shares in the family inheritance. Apparently, just before his death, their father had divided his property among his eight sons on the condition that the sons would pay the daughters in cash one-thirteenth the total value of the estate. After eight years had passed without payment, three of the five daughters tried to force payment by filing suit (Floyd Circuit Court Files #2714, 4 April 1888; the court's judgement in the case does not appear in the case file).

Legal action, however, generally did not present a challenge to male household authority. Anzie Hall had to wait until her husband died before she could safely ask the Floyd Circuit Court to invalidate the sale of her land, and the court ruled against her. Julia Frasure's husband supported her lawsuit, possibly because when he made the sale, he did not recognize the value of the timber that stood on his wife's land. The Frasures, too, lost their case and the transaction remained in force.

As with *feme sole* petitions, husbands often benefitted from wives' legal claims to property, since, if successful, they gave husbands control of those additional resources. Wives, of course, could not sue their husbands, and if a married woman wanted to bring suit against anyone else, her husband had to file the petition on her behalf. So of the three sisters who sued their brothers for their inheritance, two did so jointly with their husbands, who took the legal initiative, while the third, a widow, filed independently. The documents in the file do not make clear whether the wives sued at the instigation of their husbands or vice versa, but, either way, the lawsuit served the interests of both.

When mineral speculators, starting around 1890, approached Floyd County farmers about buying the rights for mining and drilling of coal, oil, and gas, they encountered households already fractured from the inside. Speculators' overtures became incorporated into household gender dynamics and gave greater urgency to the longstanding conflicts over control of property. Mineral sales greatly increased the value of

mountain property, raising the stakes of competitions over property ownership.

In Floyd County, women and men both seemed eager to sell their mineral rights, especially in later years when prices for minerals soared to ten, twelve, and even fifteen dollars an acre. The high dollar values attached to minerals encouraged women more than ever to assert their legal rights to their inherited property. One woman divorced her husband in 1910 because he had squandered the \$3000 in proceeds obtained from mineral sales on their jointly held land, and because he sold the minerals on her own inherited property without her consent. In the settlement, the woman received all the land and the rents from it that the couple still owned (Floyd Circuit Court Files #5397, 1 June 1910).

In a similar situation, five sisters brought suit against their brothers, claiming that the brothers had "coaxed, threatened, importuned and besought" their father shortly before he died to convey to them the whole of his estate, leaving neither land nor personal property for the sisters. The case gained especial importance because, the sisters said, the estate contained "some fifteen hundred acres of valuable Coal and timbered [sic] situated in the immediate locality where oil and gas is being found." Land that had been valued at about \$1800 in 1880 was now, eleven years later, worth at least \$7000 (Floyd Circuit Court Files #3014, 25 February 1891; Floyd County Tax Assessor Books 1880).

In those cases, mineral sales gave women incentives to push their legal rights to their limits, but those rights still did not challenge husbands' control over household business. In some rare instances, however, women did use mineral sales to acquire greater power over property management for themselves, and they often had help from coal industrialists in doing so. A few women now decided to petition the courts to allow them to sell their minerals independently of their husbands, should their husbands refuse to sell the minerals jointly. One elderly woman, for example, found herself deeply in debt, and she wanted to sell the minerals off her farm to pay her creditors. Her husband, however, who had abandoned her several years before, refused to join in the deed conveying the minerals. The woman petitioned for and received from the court a divorce from her husband and title to the property vested in her name alone so she could sell the minerals. The woman's lawyer, Walter S. Harkins, was not only her creditor but also Floyd County's most influential booster of coal industrialization, and it was he who purchased her mineral rights (Floyd Circuit Court Files #4692, 5 February 1906).

In situations like this, legal rights that had been meant to provide wives protection from husbands' misuse of their property now became a way for women to demand some control in making decisions over the disposal of household resources. Mineral sales certainly did not convince women to free themselves from the dominance of their husbands in the

household, but they did, along with the 1894 changes in married women's property rights, become part of a wider trend that acknowledged in women separate and independent decision-making powers. That capitalists like Walter Harkins, who endorsed money and development over traditions of patriarchy, would support women's enhanced power to sell mineral rights is hardly surprising. Wherever it has occurred, agents of industrialization have sought a reformulation of "traditional" social relationships, and women, too, have sought to direct that reformulation toward their own benefit. Elsewhere in United States history, as in Appalachia, women saw in capitalist development, for better or for worse, an opportunity to create for themselves an identity independent of the household (Kulikoff 1992).

Mineral sales in Eastern Kentucky did not take place in a vacuum, solely the result of outsiders taking advantage of an unknowing populace. Rather, gender divisions within pre-industrial households created a fertile ground for such transactions, encouraging property owners to part with the minerals underlying their land. Gendered conceptions of property ownership had always been associated with household subsistence and financial gain, and mineral sales simply added a new dimension to that old association. If *feme sole* petitions generally represented a collaboration between men and women manipulating gender conventions to protect the household from insolvency, other negotiations of gender claims were more divisive. Women often staked their claim to property control through divorce suits by accusing their husbands of squandering household resources, while men resorted to violence to prevent their wives from interfering with their business decisions. Mineral sales underscored those fissures by giving men greater reason to control land transactions and women greater reason to demand their legal rights. Floyd County women and men, then, understood mineral sales in the context of pre-industrial gender and property relations, relations which included conflicts over land, the bedrock of household subsistence and intra-household power.

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# Recollections About Life in Appalachia's Coal Camps: Positive or Negative?

Mary B. La Lone

What are people's recollections of their lives in the coal mining camps of Appalachia? Did they consider life in the coal camps a harsh and mean existence as portrayed by the popular fictional images of *Storming Heaven* (Giardina 1987) and *Matewan* (Sayles 1987), and to some extent in the work of scholars such as Eller (1982), Gaventa (1980), and Corbin (1981)? Or did life in the mining camps include positive, rewarding experiences and choices for the participants, as suggested in recent works by Shiflett (1991) and Fishback (1992)? While scholars may be tempted to characterize the experience in either black or white terms, ethnographic interviews with people who lived in the coal camps rarely give this simplistic perspective. Rather, people frequently express both positive and negative attitudes toward the coal camp within the same interview. Additionally, they often sort out both positive and negative features of each experience, whether it was working for the company, drawing scrip, or living in a coal camp. Some of the positive statements may, at first, surprise us.

This paper examines the recollections of people who lived in mining camps within an eleven-mile radius of the town of Appalachia, located in the heart of the Southwest Virginia coal fields. Appalachia served as the commercial center for the study area which encompassed eighteen different coal mining camps in Wise and Lee Counties. These camps operated under three coal mining companies: Stonega Coke and Coal (SC&C), Blackwood Coal and Coke, and Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke. The three-year research project studied life in these coal camps, combining ethnographic/oral-history interviews with archival research.<sup>1</sup> Exten-

sive ethnographic interviews were conducted with over fifty men and women who lived in the eighteen coal camps during the 1930s through the 1950s.

### **The most frequently stated, clearly negative attitudes**

- 1) Miners had to endure very poor conditions prior to unionization in October 1933.
- 2) The companies strongly responded with anti-union activities, 1933-34.
- 3) It took hard work to feed and maintain a family in the Depression years of the 1930s.
- 4) Mechanization in the mid-1950s led to massive job decline.
- 5) There were major difficulties getting black lung compensation.

Negative sentiments focus on the low wages, hard work, and long hours that characterized mining in the pre-union period prior to 1934. Before union contracts, miners did not have access to 1) old age retirement or pensions, forcing elderly men to continue working to feed their families; 2) black lung assistance, forcing miners to continue working in the mines even if they could hardly breathe; 3) widows' pensions; 4) paid vacations; and 5) long-term compensation for major injuries (Flanary 1992; Mabe 1993, 1; Skorupa 1992, 2; Stanley 1993, 1).

Unrest over unionization in the Appalachian region was especially heavy from July to October 1933, and continued periodically during the year following the signing of the first union contract in October 1933 (*The Post*, 1933; WCCR). People recall the retaliation against miners who joined the union and who went on strike. Tommy Skorupa, a miner who struck against the company in 1934, states "the company was quite mean; they didn't want the unions in the camps" (1992, 1; WCCR). Many people remember that any man caught organizing would be fired and would have his family's furniture put on the street (Fields 1993, 1; Bobroski 1993, 1). According to SC&C records, the company fired a number of miners from 1 July to 2 October 1933, the period of heaviest unrest, confirming this recollection (WCCR).

While the overall feeling about the unionization period may be negative, some people qualify their statements. Extremes in violence took place on both sides, by union supporters as well as company representatives. People recall that non-union miners' homes were stoned and that they were run out of the camps. Many mention that people they knew had fought for the union (Bobroski 1993, 2; Fields 1993, 1; Santelli 1992, 2; Stanley 1993, 1; Skorupa 1992, 2). Also, some interviewees made the qualification that the unionization conflict in this region was not nearly on the same scale of violence as the battles fought across Black Mountain in "Bloody Harlan," Kentucky (Stanley 1993, 1).

Memories of the 1930s are also integrally bound up with hard times caused by the Depression. People recall the Depression era as a time when it took a lot of hard work to feed and clothe a family. Everyone, including the children, worked in family gardens to supplement wages from the mines (Flanary 1992, 1; Mabe 1993, 1-2; Santelli 1992, 1-3; Stanley 1993, 1). Yet some pointed out that nearly everybody in the camps was in relatively the same economic situation, so they did not know what they were missing. For example, after talking about taking over primary household duties for her family at age eleven and scrubbing her fingers to the bone on the washboard, Mary Santelli says: "Time was, for me, growin' up as a child I found it very hard, but yet I didn't suffer any hardness in it too bad because you see at that time I thought everybody on this earth was living the way we were living" (1992, 2).

Negative recollections primarily focus on the early 1930s, especially 1933–1934, the period surrounding UMWA organizing. Fewer negative comments refer to the 1940s and 1950s. While some people speak about the company owning and controlling everything in the camps, this is generally expressed in the form of an acknowledgment rather than as a negative sentiment. Only two issues relating to the latter decades left people with strong negative sentiments. One was the mechanization of the mines around 1954–1955. People see the resulting loss of jobs as the beginning of the end for the coal camps. Men and their families had to migrate out of the region in search of jobs, while in the camps, the companies started selling houses and closing down essential facilities such as the stores and schools (Mabe 1993, 1). The other issue raised, one which touches many people deeply, was the often lengthy fight of miners and their families to obtain black lung compensation.

### **The most frequently stated positive attitudes**

1. The coal camp had a strong sense of community. Neighbors were like family; they interacted with one another, and helped each other out.
2. The personal qualities of people who lived in the camps were admirable: honesty, a capacity for sharing, ingenuity, and pride in their work.
3. The company was "fair" and "good" to employees: it "provided" for workers by "furnishing" jobs, camp facilities, sources of entertainment, and credit.

Without a doubt, the most commonly expressed positive statements revolve around the strong sense of community that existed in the coal camps from the 1930s to the 1950s. The most frequently mentioned elements are: 1) everyone knew each other, neighbors were like family, and there was a great amount of visiting and social interaction in the



community; 2) the spirit of sharing and reciprocity was strong in the camp, where everybody helped each other out; and 3) there was relatively little crime in the camps. Interviews abound with discussion of these issues, clearly pointing to the shared qualities that made the coal camps feel like true “communities” to their residents. In addition to community, many people attribute positive aspects of living in the coal camps to the personal qualities and ethics of the people who lived in the camps, especially honesty, sharing, ingenuity, and pride in their work (Bobroski 1993, 2; Flanary 1993; Santelli 1992, 2). As Louis Henegar emphasized, it’s the “type of people you got” in the coal camps (1992, 2).

A sampling of testimony gives a sense of the strength of feelings about the coal camp community. In a representative statement about the camp as community, Clint Mabe says, “Why, I think a real coal camp was one of the closest people anywhere in the world. Cause you take the neighbors, they were neighbors. They wasn’t just good to you [today], and mad at you tomorrow. But something happen to you, I don’t care how mad your neighbor is at you, I guarantee, he’d be the first to get to you” (1993, 2). His statements, like those of many others, attribute much of the special nature of the community to a strong orientation toward generalized reciprocity. “Helping our neighbors out, anytime, I don’t care what it was. Course there wasn’t a whole lot of money to be loaned or anything like that back then. But, anytime, and it didn’t matter what it was, if they needed help with anything, if we could possibly help ’em, we would. And they would do us the same” (Mabe 1993, 2).

Louis Henegar says “the community was more or less just one large family” and he speaks of specific types of reciprocity within the camp:

Now don’t get me wrong. It don’t mean that people didn’t disagree and have problems. But yet still, it was more like, it wasn’t just you having a hard time or me having a hard time. Everybody lived the same way and I think it made them more close knit, you know more of a family-type thing. Then if you were destitute to the point that maybe you didn’t have food in the house or something like that, then I would be there to see that you had it. And the rest of the neighbors would be there to see what they could do. If you were sick, then everyone would come and offer assistance. If your husband had gotten hurt and no income and no food, the neighbors would see that you didn’t go hungry. You know, make sure you got food and stuff like that (1992, 2).

Henegar refers to the ethical “code” that supported reciprocity as “a way of life.” “This was just a way of life here. You didn’t have to organize it, you know. There was—it was just a code. If you were in need, it was my job to help you. And vice-versa. It was that way, you didn’t have to

ask, people knew what was going on" (1992, 1).

In addition, people speak of the high degree of social interaction and visiting that gave the camp its sense of community. Some, like Mary and Henry Fields, emphasize that people didn't have to go out of the camp to enjoy themselves because there was always plenty of visiting and events taking place within the camp (1993, 1). Others, like Rose Herron, spoke of neighbors regularly visiting with one another and pointed out that the houses were so close together that on a typical summer night, women visited with one another as they did their ironing on the porch and watched their children playing down the road (1992, 1).

The coal camps were inwardly focused on life in the community, a focus that remained until the late 1940s. This was reinforced by two conditions: the camp was set up with all the facilities necessary to the mining family, and lack of cars and other forms of transportation didn't support mobility out of the camps. But even in the 1940s and 1950s, testimony indicates that the sense of community, comprised of generalized reciprocity and neighborliness, remained exceptionally strong (Reece 1992, 1; VanWinkle 1993, 1).

What might be most surprising is the large number of positive statements that many former coal camp residents make about the coal companies. These positive statements are often mixed with some of the negative remarks already mentioned. Many people had favorable things to say about the coal companies' actions in providing for employees and their dependents. People support their view of the company as a "provider" with what they consider to be very concrete reasons, citing jobs, facilities, and the credit extended to them by the company.

Clint Mabe feels "fortunate" that the company kept him working during the mid-1950s when mine shutdowns were forcing many people he knew to leave the region to search for work. He says, "Well, I can't complain much [about the company] because they kept me in a job" (1993, 1). Similarly, Tommy Skorupa says, "I worked for them all these years [fifty], but I never was mistreated by them; so I can't say nothing but good about 'em." He goes on to specify that the company kept him working even when the mines were shut or operating only a few days per week. He feels fortunate that he was provided with other jobs, such as delivering coal to homes, painting houses, and repairing plumbing. Additionally, the company provided jobs for his children in the company store and on camp clean-up crews during the summer months. Skorupa was not blind to the fact that those were minimum wage jobs and, in fact, acknowledges this in his interview. What is significant to him is that the company helped him out by providing jobs for him and his family (Skorupa 1993, 1-2).

People speak about the coal companies being "good" because they provided services and facilities for people living in the camps. Nearly

everyone describes the variety of facilities that were available—the stores, schools, movie theaters, dance halls, and churches. Others also describe the entertainment that the companies organized for the camps including Fourth of July and Christmas events, baseball teams, and Saturday night concerts with big bands (Bobroski 1993, 1-2; Fields 1993, 2; Herron 1992, 1, Stanley 1993, 1). Their use of words is interesting—they often say that the company “provided” and “furnished” them with these facilities and activities. Having the company store, other facilities, and entertainment right in camp was seen as a convenience by many. You could take the trip to Appalachia, “but really, you didn’t have to get out of camp ’cause the company had everything” (Skorupa 1992, 1).

For some people, this sense of the company “providing” for camp residents even extends to the scrip system and other ways in which credit was extended to miners. The company is seen as being “fair” because, people say, it continued to support miners, those known as hard-working miners, by carrying their rent and extending them credit even during the slack times when the mines were shut down. Tommy Skorupa speaks of the 1930s when the mines operated two to three days per week and idled the rest:

If you didn’t have enough money in payroll, see, the company could furnish you the scrip according to your family [size]. If you had a big family, you’d get so much a day, and you could go in the commissary and trade. So the company was very good on that. And I remember one time we was on strike, and there would be some days you know, the company would give scrip to us. When you went back to work, you’d pay them back, see. They was pretty good to people (1992, 2; 1993, 1).

Clearly, Skorupa sees the positive aspects of getting credit in the company store. Additionally, he talks of the benefits of not having to come up with down payments to either rent a house or buy an automobile. To him, it was a benefit to be able to buy a car by getting a loan from the company bank and paying it off over time (Skorupa 1993, 2). He is not alone in viewing scrip credit as a positive feature. Mary Fields says, “the company store was good to us too. The company was real good to us. When he’s off work [referring to her husband, Henry] they give us food” (1993, 2).

In Rose Herron’s words, “the company [SC&C] was wonderful to work for, in one sense of the way because they would give you a dollar a day scrip and two dollars on Saturday, whether you had it in there or not.” This was especially important to her family in the first years after she “set up housekeeping” in Imboden in the late 1930s. Herron also valued the opportunity to use company credit to acquire the furniture and other large items needed to establish her first household (1992, 1).

How can we explain the presence of these positive attitudes along with the negative? They are not necessarily incompatible. The positive sentiments expressed may come into better perspective if we make some comparisons with our own behavior and attitudes today. Should we be surprised that coal camp families, like many people today, appreciated the convenience of having stores and services nearby in the coal camps? Today, many of us shop at the closest grocery store, even when we know that the prices there are higher (as in the company store), because we value the convenience. Or should we be terribly surprised that coal camp families appreciated the opportunity to be able to furnish their homes and buy cars using credit, even if it meant getting in debt to the company? Many of us today are aware of exploitation in the credit card and bank loan system, yet we are still pleased to have the opportunity to immediately purchase a TV or VCR on credit, rather than waiting until some future time when we could pay cash. When we make these comparisons, we can better understand how coal camp families might have viewed opportunities for convenience and credit positively, even while being quite aware of the overall exploitation in the system.

It is important to re-emphasize that nearly every person interviewed recognizes and acknowledges the negative as well as the positive aspects of coal camp life. While there may be some nostalgia involved, overall the responses are quite pragmatic. The interviewees recognize the negative, exploitative aspects of the company-run system, but weigh them against the positive personal experiences they had living in the coal camps. Tommy Skorupa recognizes that the company controlled things and "had their own rules," but he also appreciates the conveniences and credit offered by the company (1992, 1; 1993, 2). Rose Herron knows that it was to the company's advantage to give credit, but she is grateful she had the opportunity to get her household established using scrip and store credit (1992, 1, 3). Even though Henry Fields organized for the union against the company, he still enjoys the sense of community that he experienced living in the coal camps (1993, 1).

The documentation from this case study suggests at least two areas needing further clarification and research in Appalachian coal camp studies. First, we need to be more clear in distinguishing temporal and regional variations within Appalachia. The *Matewan* image of extreme violence and hardship is primarily derived from a particular time period and region, specifically applicable to parts of Kentucky and West Virginia before and during unionization efforts. That situation cannot be generalized to include all times and places in Appalachia. In Southwest Virginia, former coal camp residents have negative recollections of hardship and exploitation on a more limited scale, primarily associated with the period just prior to and during unionization in the 1930s.

People who lived in the camps in the 1940s and 1950s, after the struggles of the Depression and unionization, reaped the benefits of better working conditions, greater transportation mobility, and prosperity in coal production during World War II. While they recall the rigors of coal camp life in the 1940s and 1950s, they also speak eloquently of the strengths of the coal camps as true communities.

Second, more study needs to be done on the micro-level. Oral testimonies portray 1930s to 1950s coal camp life as far more complex than a simple black or white, positive or negative experience. Anthropologists recognize two different, but complementary, views on any cultural situation: the "emic" or cultural insider's perspectives on his/her own life experiences as a participant immersed within the situation and the "etic" or cultural outsider's perspectives derived from examining that participant's experiences within the context of wider networks of interaction and power relationships (e.g. as in dependency theories).

Both perspectives represent part of the cultural reality. While scholars, from their "etic" vantage point, might tend to generalize the Appalachian coal camp experience in simple terms, we are finding that the people who actually lived in the coal camps have shaped their "emic" perspectives by more intricately intertwining both the perceived positive aspects with the negative aspects. People disliked the hardships but also appreciated what they considered to be positive personal encounters with family, community, and even, at times, the company. The shaping of the "emic" perception may be a survival strategy in itself, enabling the participant to adjust to life within an exploitative system. Clearly, micro-level case studies might help us better understand how people thought, behaved, and shaped their identities from within the coal camp experience. The strongest investigations of coal camp life will incorporate and integrate multiple types of analyses to get a fuller picture of the coal camp experience. They will integrate micro-level analyses of people interacting and making sense of their lives within their families, communities, and immediate regions with macro-level analyses which view the interaction of economic and political forces within and among larger regions. Each type of analysis portrays a part of the reality; together they would work as complementary pieces in reconstructing the whole reality of life in the Appalachian coal camps.

Perhaps Clint Mabe provided the best conclusion for this paper when, in reference to life in the camps in the 1930s, he says, "We had a good life. It wasn't rich like most people. But it was richer than most people think" (1993, 1).

## Notes

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# *Storming Heaven in the Decade of Greed*

Kim Gillespie

At one point in Oliver Stone's film *Wall Street*, leveraged buy-out artist Gordon Gecko addresses the shareholders' meeting of TelDar Paper, a company he plans to buy. To convince shareholders his ownership is beneficial, Gecko gives the following speech:

The point is, ladies and gentlemen, that greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed in all of its forms—greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge has marked the upward surge of mankind and greed—you mark my words—will not only save TelDar Paper but that other malfunctioning corporation called the USA.

Eventually destroyed by a fellow broker in cahoots with the federal government, Gecko represents the 1980s as the decade of greed. Many now share this view. For example, in the April 1994 issue of *Mother Jones*, economists trying to explain the lack of job creation in the post-1990-91 recession felt compelled to refer to the 1980s as the greedy decade. Lester Thurow, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology economics professor, said, "In the 1980s, we had a speculative bubble followed by a financial crash. Right now we're cleaning up the mess," and John Kenneth Galbraith, a Harvard economist, said, "There were a variety of insanities in the 1980s . . . All left the basic economic institutions in poor condition" (Clark 1994, 34-5).

At first appearance, Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven* does not comment on the 1980s. After all, it recounts the destinies of characters involved in the 1920-21 labor insurrection which culminated in the Matewan Massacre and the Battle of Blair Mountain near Logan, West Virginia. However, in the afterword to the novel, the reader is intro-



duced to the fictional author, Dillon Freeman, the son of Carrie Bishop, a nurse who worked an aid station at Blair Mountain, and Rondal Lloyd, a labor organizer who fought there. By introducing a contemporary fictional author at the end of the novel, *Storming Heaven* focuses the reader's attention on the relevance of the novel's historical narrative for the present. Dillon, also a union man, has collected the stories which make up the novel during time down from picket duty. The strike which absorbs Dillon is the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) strike in 1984 against A. T. Massey.

The Massey strike was a part of the process of economic restructuring which occurred in the coal industry in the 1980s. At a coal trade conference in North Carolina in 1989, Allen Born, president and chairman of AMAX, Inc., the largest mining company in the United States, described this process. During the 1970s, Born said, the coal industry expanded because rising oil prices made coal competitive. However, when the price of oil dropped in the early 1980s, so did the demand for coal. Faced with falling prices and excess capacity, the coal industry responded by closing and downsizing mines, reducing staff, mechanizing, and shifting more and more production to Western mines and to strip-mining, all methods to reduce cost. From these changes in the coal industry, Born draws lessons for coal operators. The successful coal company will be low cost, will apply new technologies, and will be flexible in its ability to respond to market pressures, to the needs of customers, and to international competition. It will be (what he calls) "quality"—that is, highly profitable. Looking forward into the 1990s, Allen Born recommends the coal industry as "a good place for a young person to build a career" (Born 1989, 13).

In West Virginia, economic restructuring was characterized by a simultaneous shift from manufacturing and mining to service jobs, from relatively high to low pay jobs, and from male dominated to female dominated jobs. During the decade the state suffered continuous outmigration and population decline as natives went out of state to find employment. By the end of the decade, West Virginia finished 50th of all the states in per capita income (down from 47th in 1979), and by the early 1990s, one quarter of West Virginians lived in poverty (Maggard 1994). The coal industry was especially involved in restructuring. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of coal miners in the United States declined by about 40 percent; in West Virginia, by about 45 percent (from about 53,000 miners in 1980 to about 29,000 in 1989). Naturally, rapid declines in the work force produce social discord. On 1 October 1984, UMWA struck the mines of A. T. Massey located in the Tug River Valley, which includes portions of Eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia, because A. T. Massey refused to sign a recently concluded contract between UMWA and the Bituminous Coal Operators Associa-

tion. A. T. Massey contended that because it faced international competition it had to reduce labor costs through decentralization in which each unit of a parent company would be treated as a separate company and would negotiate a separate labor contract with the union (Lubove 1985, 6). "You can't discipline union miners and you can't discharge them," said Don Blankenship, who eventually became chairman and CEO of A. T. Massey in 1990. "You have to be able to purge your work force of unproductive elements in some way" (Mills 1986, 176). According to owner E. Morgan Massey, decentralization was the way.

On the union side, purges meant problems. First, by negotiating separate contracts, the company would eliminate panel rights. Panel rights give union miners the right to transfer to another mine should their present mine close down. If Massey won separate contracts, then no such obligation would exist from one Massey mine to another. The loss of panel rights would allow the company to "cherry pick" which miners they wanted by transferring the congenial miners after a mine closure and firing the uncongenial. Secondly, while E. Morgan Massey worried about "decentralization," the union was concerned with what it called "double breasting," in which a parent company transfers assets—in this case, coal mines—from a unionized to a non-unionized subsidiary. Then, union miners can be fired and replaced with non-union miners. In a variation of this practice, a company closes down a union mine, laying off all the workers, then rehires non-union workers at the same mine ("Coal Miners in Bitter Strike Against A. T. Massey" 1985, 4). On 20 December 1985, the strike ended in a union victory, after the National Labor Relations Board ruled all of A. T. Massey's mines belonged to one company and therefore had to be governed by a single contract, though E. Morgan Massey referred to the end of the strike as an "unconditional surrender" on the part of the union (Wolford 1986, 5). In short, then, the struggle was between an attempt on the part of a company to reduce labor costs and increase flexibility in work rules against workers' attempts to preserve job security.

Since Giardina uses the fictional name American Coal for A. T. Massey, against which two generations of characters struggle, I think it is possible to read *Storming Heaven* as what Fredric Jameson calls a national allegory—in this case, a national allegory of the 1980s. While the literature of the metropole can devolve into the psychological musings of isolated individuals bereft of community and historical consciousness, argues Jameson, the literature of the Third World cannot, where the telling of the story of individuals necessitates the recitation of "the primordial crime of capitalism" (Jameson 1986, 84).<sup>1</sup> It is my argument that *Storming Heaven* is a national allegory of the 1980s to the degree that the lives of individual characters represent the combative social relations of the decade, understood not as isolated experiences

or events but as constitutive of the national identity. I would like to show the relationship between *Storming Heaven* and the decade of greed by pointing to two features of the novel.

First of all, although Giardina reports that *Storming Heaven* was produced through archival research and that no incident is without historical antecedent or precedent, the novel relies on a narrative of Appalachian colonization, codified, for example, in *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Lewis, Johnson, and Askins 1978).<sup>2</sup> In *Storming Heaven*, Appalachian colonization is a two-staged process. Initially, characters are wrenched off their land by violence and economic compulsion. Railroads buy up the land, demanding local farmers sign away mineral rights, then sell the mineral rights to coal companies which in turn begin to exploit these resources. For example, one of the characters involved in this process is C. J. Marcum, who becomes a surrogate father for Rondal Lloyd. C. J. Marcum's own father, one of the farmers who will not sign away his mineral rights, is shot in the head while working in his garden (Giardina 1987, 16). Though C. J. becomes a small businessman, most families are driven off the land and into the mines. This is what happens to Rondal's father and to Rondal himself.

Once in mining communities, the miners organize against a gang of rapacious British, New England, and local coal operators. The miners are forced to resist operators because wages plummet in the coal glut after World War I and because the operators attempt to control them through what was called the thug system. If we were discussing El Salvador, we would identify these thugs as death squads: an oligarchy of coal operators employs a private paramilitary security force of detectives from the Baldwin-Felts agency to brutalize a recalcitrant work force. To end the thug system, Rondal joins the union, is forced to flee southern West Virginia, then returns as an organizer with a *nom de guerre*—Lloyd Justice. When he is wounded at Blair Mountain, it is in a fight with a crew of thugs, police, and newly deputized college students and American Legionnaires, amassed in defense of the right of multinational corporations (for example, the manager of Imperial Collieries makes an appearance) to rule the lives of miners by fiat and the local constabulary to jail without writ those miners who complain.

For Giardina, who participated in the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force in 1979-80, absentee land ownership is the *sine qua non* of colonialism.<sup>3</sup> That is, the narrative of Appalachian colonization relies for its coherence not only on the existence of force and fraud to deprive agrarian communities of their land base, and of economic compulsion and death squads to transform displaced populations into miners, but also on the presence of an external force (here, the multinational corporation) whose ownership of the land confers on it a virtually sovereign

power over the lives of Appalachians. To understand the emphasis Giardina places on absentee ownership of land, we ought to recall she grew up in McDowell County, West Virginia, which has one of the most extensive concentrations of absentee ownership in Appalachia (Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force 1983, 17-26).

The explanatory power of the narrative of Appalachian colonization can be seen in the last line of the novel, spoken in Dillon Freeman's voice: "the companies still own the land" (Giardina 1987, 312). Connecting the historical narrative of the novel to current events, this line indicates the power of colonization to produce continuous labor struggles across generations. Against any suspicion that Giardina is engaged in hyperbole, it is important to note that during the A. T. Massey strike, the company—the eighth largest coal operator in the United States and the second largest exporter of coal—was partly owned by Fluor Corp. and partly owned by Royal/Dutch Shell. That is, it was a multinational corporation. More importantly, its relationship to southern West Virginia was a familiar one. Commenting on the role of multinationals in West Virginia, E. Morgan Massey said "Multinationals do not have a great deal of national loyalty and even less loyalty to southern West Virginia" (Mills 1986, 488).

Giardina's narrative of Appalachian colonization is set against another more widely recognized narrative in which the violence of the region is treated not as endemic but alien to U.S. culture. Appalachia has long been a pocket within the contiguous United States where violence has been consistently rediscovered by metropolitans. For example, a 26 August 1986 *Time* magazine article on the A. T. Massey strike reports that:

A stranger coming upon the gorgeous green mountains soaring over the Tug Fork Valley of West Virginia near the Kentucky border would not, at first glance, suspect that a combat zone was at hand. Yet for more than a century, bloody civil strife has roiled the region embraced by Mingo County, W.Va., and Pike County, Ky. There in the late 1800s, the Hatfield and McCoy families began a feud so lethal and long that it became legend. Then in 1920 the early struggles of the region's coal miners to unionize exploded into a fray that left nine people dead and is still remembered as "the Matewan massacre." Now the area around the same little town of Matewan (pop. 822) is living up to its turbulent reputation: a coal miners' strike that is now in its eleventh month is well on the way to becoming the longest and meanest since before World War II (Trippett 1985, 17).

In this narrative of the history of southern West Virginia, a stranger regards a beautiful landscape, momentarily empty of people. This

stranger, which I take to be the reporter's construction of his audience (that is, *Time* magazine's national readership), then learns that despite the beauty of the mountains the people of southern West Virginia are historically and culturally violent. I want to make three brief comments about this construction of the relationship of the reader to West Virginia. First, it repeats a familiar image of Appalachia as an alien place physically internal but culturally external to the borders of the United States, an image reported by Henry Shapiro in *Appalachia on Our Mind* (1978) as going back to the local color movement in the late nineteenth century. Second, the construction of the metropolitan traveler with his preference for a landscape without people and his fear of violent natives is a common one in colonial travel narratives, according to Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992). Third, the absence of a historical context for the events shows that the Hatfield-McCoy feud and the Matewan Massacre are not cited as historical incidents. Rather, they are cited to reduce the strike to an internecine struggle between feuding clans, a reduction which dismisses any substantive issues in the labor conflict by appealing to a middle-class loathing of violence in all forms and to a metropolitan sense of superiority to rural regions. *Storming Heaven* debunks the myth of Appalachian backwardness, still at play in reportage of the A. T. Massey strike, by uncovering the multicultural, cosmopolitan, and global nature of the coal camps: they were ethnically and racially diverse, they were visited by Duke Ellington, and they expanded and contracted with changes in the world economy.

In addition to the use of the narrative of Appalachian colonization, there is also a second way in which *Storming Heaven* interprets the decade of greed. *Storming Heaven* describes the ability of communities divided by race and gender to achieve solidarity, itself an effect of both the agency of individual actors and of the oppressive social conditions of colonialism. The importance of solidarity amid difference is one of the crucial issues faced by social movements in the 1980s, an issue not taken up in *Wall Street* but one which prompted a good deal of concern among labor historians (for example, Mike Davis 1986; Rick Fantasia 1988; Michael Goldfield 1987; and Kim Moody 1988), who treated gender and racial divisions as two of the most significant realities underwriting the decline of unionism in the 1980s.

In *Storming Heaven*, while coal communities are segregated and culturally racist, African Americans play a particularly important role in the growing resistance to coal operators. For example, Dr. Toussaint L'Ouverture Booker is a Marxist intellectual who first brings a labor organizer to Annadel, the fictional town in which much of the action takes place, helps Carrie Bishop become a nurse, and works as a doctor of wounded miners at the Battle of Blair Mountain. Also, probably the most gripping scene of the entire novel (one which Giardina admits is

the only scene she has written which has given her nightmares) is the death of Johnson, a black union organizer, thrown into an oven by some thugs at the behest of Malcolm Denbigh, the manager of American Coal. Not only is this scene gut-wrenching in itself, but it moves Rondal Lloyd to recall it later in a speech in front of a congregation of miners.

"Johnson wouldn't be a slave no more!" says Rondal. "He died a free man. They's slaves today in Justice County, both white and black. Hit's time to break them chains" (Giardina 1987, 193). Clearly, Johnson's death in the fiery furnace has provided Rondal with an example of the difficulties of unionizing and with a paradigm of how to interpret the events of his life.

Like African Americans in *Storming Heaven*, women also play an important role in the growing resistance to the coal operators. Although the coal communities are segmented by gender (the men mine; the women housekeep) and although even Carrie Bishop, atypical because she works outside the home, is employed in the traditional female profession of nursing, women sustain the continuity of the labor struggle. At one point after the food in a tent city has been depleted, a group of women raid a store for food. When the women are accosted by a gang of thugs, Carrie Bishop fires on them with a machine gun, securing the women's retreat. Like Doc Booker, Carrie treats miners wounded in the Battle of Blair Mountain and after Rondal is severely wounded is instrumental in transporting him out of the combat zone to safety. In fact, his life is saved through Carrie's intercession with her brother Miles, who, at great personal cost, allows him to ride on a coal company train.

Most importantly, in contrast to the coal operators who seek to homogenize men and nature, Carrie and her female relatives value human particularity. On the one hand, human particularity is manifest in the notion of kin in which each person has a place in an elaborate set of relationships, conferring obligations on all. The obligation produced by kinship necessitates a respect even for those who appear odd or abnormal. For example, after asking about an aunt who is reputed to have no pubic hair, Carrie is told, "Your Aunt Becka is funny turned, but she's a good woman. And she's kin. Aunt Becka cant help the way God made her, and she has a right to be the way she is. . . . As for you, you just be like your own self" (Giardina 1987, 49). On the other hand, human particularity is manifest in Carrie's relationship to the land. At one point, Carrie meditates on her relationship to her homeplace, the farm where she was born and raised. She thinks that "if there was no place of my own to be, no ground where my bones could be laid beside my kin's, would I not be the most miserable creature in God's world?" (1987, 141). An appreciation of the importance of kinship and of home constitute solidarity as much as the mobilization of miners at Blair Mountain. In

fact, in terms of the continuity of struggle, they are more important. Carrie lives to pass the story of the struggles of the 1920s down to the next generation, thus helping to produce the latest strike against American Coal.

The 1980s have come to be interpreted as a time when conservative governmental elites gave the green light to speculation, through anti-unionism, deregulation, and a diminution of governmental oversight. Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* is an early popular example of this interpretation, an interpretation advanced by representatives of very powerful and wealthy groups themselves, which lacks an acknowledgment that some communities resisted the process of economic restructuring. *Storming Heaven* remedies this lack. By providing an imaginative historical context to a contemporary conflict, it offers a lesson for the present. Multinationals will always face global competition. They did in the 1920s, they did in the 1980s, they do in the 1990s. The only bulwark against the ability of companies to slough off workers like dead skin and dismantle working-class communities like tinker toys is the strength of communities to overcome their internal divisions and stand together.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Aijaz Ahmad has taken Jameson to task for this article, insisting that Jameson reduces any nation's aesthetic response to only the national allegory, a reduction Ahmad repudiates, and that Jameson unfairly does not apply his reduction to the literature of the metropole (Ahmad 1992). As far as I can tell, none of these criticisms impinge upon my use here of the concept of national allegory.

<sup>2</sup> All references to Giardina's biography and opinions are derived from conversations with her between October 1993 and March 1994, including an extensive conversation while traveling through McDowell County, West Virginia. Throughout these conversations, Giardina showed remarkable candor and patience and was quite generous with her time and attention. I should note that for Giardina, *Storming Heaven* is not particularly a novel about the 1980s. Her only conscious response to the 1980s, she reported, was to shift from the first-person narration of an early version of *Storming Heaven* to the multiple first-person narration of the final version. She reasoned that "the message from the Reagan administration was to divorce yourself from people with problems and look after Number One, to be numb when it came to relating to things people were going through" and that "telling it in the first person was a direct attack on that in terms of forcing the reader to identify with the characters by being the characters." From the point of view of her biography, the economic restructuring of the 1980s was not peculiar but was in fact one more example of the social discord produced by the hubris of coal operators, the utility maximization of multinational corporations, the disloyalty of absentee ownership, and the vicissitudes of West Virginia's monoeconomy buffeted by the winds of global

competition. Giardina's own direct experience with economic restructuring came not in the 1980s but in the 1960s when the collapse of the coal industry depopulated McDowell County where she was born and raised. In addition, Giardina discounted the importance of the afterword, explaining that her editor suggested it, insisting readers would want to know what happened to characters after the Battle of Blair Mountain. If Giardina had her way, she would cut or revise the afterword. However, although the editor demanded an afterword, she was not specific. The details are Giardina's own.

<sup>3</sup> Giardina's assessment of the importance of land in understanding the colonial situation is seconded by Edward Said, who, in his discussion of Yeats's poetry, argued that "if there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical element. . . . For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of the locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored" (1993, 225).

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# Speech Acts and Cultural Resistance in a Rural Eastern Kentucky Community

Anita Puckett

In a now classic community study in North Carolina, John Stephenson offers the following anecdotal narrative concerning the work “habits” of many mountain men:

One local story that has been handed down with embellishments over the years tells of a man who helped build the “scenic,” a parkway through the mountains nearby. Although this was not a factory job, the story illustrates well the local attitude toward close work supervision. The man’s job involved hauling loose dirt and rock away from a construction site and dumping it over a nearby cliff. After dumping each load, he would lean on his wheelbarrow and watch the dirt cascade to the bottom of the cliff. The supervisor, after watching the worker enjoy several episodes of this time-wasting spectator sport, walked over to him and said gruffly, “Why don’t you get another and watch it chase the first one down?” To which the worker is said to have replied, “Why don’t let’s watch the wheelbarrow chase it?” At this he pushed the wheelbarrow over the cliff and “went to the house” (walked off the job) (Stephenson 1968, 27-28).

This type of work behavior in which a laborer responds to a command or “order” given by a work superior with non-compliance of one form or another routinely supports popular non-local conceptualizations of a recalcitrant, hostile labor force in rural Appalachia. These

conceptualizations in turn frequently legitimate a politics of labor in which differences in interpretations of labor relations become opportunities for those in control or power to denigrate or at least misunderstand those who question or contest their ways of organizing work (Anglin 1992, 1993; Kingsolver 1991, 1992; see also Bourdieu 1977, 1984). For example, Stephenson's comment that this narrative reflects the "local attitude toward close work supervision" is in itself an interpretation by some one not local to the community which reflects his view about the cause of the work problem. It may or may not be in accord with how the laborer operating under his cultural models would view this same situation, as he may not view the problem as one of close supervision at all. He may indeed be operating under a very different set of meaning structures regarding work and work relations than is either Stephenson or this man's supervisor, differences that probably are not idiosyncratic to him, but culturally normative for his local area.

The question I wish to address is how speech-in-use functions to create these differences in meanings and what role these differences play in perpetuating cultural misunderstandings. I propose to focus on speech-in-use because of its power to convey a multiplicity of meanings simultaneously and precisely. Speech can map on to action, it can refer to work activities, and it can index, or point to, key elements present in work contexts. It is therefore the richest source of information available for exploring differences in cultural meaning. A category of speech acts called speech directives are speech forms that have an explicit goal of directing the behavior of others and are known to communicate especially rich and salient cultural meanings in addition to linguistic ones (Ervin-Tripp 1976; Searle 1976). I focus specifically on imperatives, the most obvious form of speech directives, because they are often construed by mountain residents to be "orders," or bald commands, and are well known to elicit highly negative affect through their explicit function of asserting control over others (for discussion see, for example, Hicks 1976, 88-98; Williams 1992, 31-36).

The data used for this analysis comes from rural Eastern Kentucky speakers living in a community historically dominated by logging and farming (rather than a coal camp). The community has been given the pseudonym of Ash Creek. Data were collected ethnographically as I lived and worked in the community for two years and in the surrounding area for six. I sampled speech using techniques now common to linguistic anthropology.<sup>1</sup> In general, the data were collected using similar strategies articulated by other anthropologists performing extended ethnographic sampling in mountain communities (for example, Batteau 1983; Beaver 1986; Hicks 1976; Pearsall 1959). I participated as fully as possible in community life. I taught community college classes and eventually acquired a role as "teacher."<sup>2</sup>

Data collection focussed upon the speech and other communication used within work contexts, whether the labor was performed for wages or for some other purpose. As such a broad definition of work applies to most daily activities, this focus required that I note speech in every setting likely to be encountered by most community residents, whether they be at home, at work, in town, at the courthouse, or within state or federal agency contexts. Most residents are highly routine in their daily habits, so repeated sampling from similar settings was indeed possible, given the time frame and an eventual sample size of about 100 residents of all ages.

Strong social pressure also existed for long-term non-locals such as myself to conform to communicative norms in order to be incorporated into community life. Such expectations of conformity further reinforced how I interpreted the data, as misuses of speech forms resulted in social misfires or corrections from friends and associates. These metacommentaries about what should have been said or done offered me a framework for a culturally acceptable analysis of how to “talk country” appropriately (Puckett 1993<sup>3</sup>).

Since the data were sampled from routine, normative laboring situations, I could expect residents to be creating and recreating their own systems of labor relations within an appropriate cultural setting and under minimal influence of non-local corporate or formal institutional laboring systems. Minimizing the effect of non-local corporate laboring systems on community speaking patterns was especially important to determine what *were* the interpretations local residents assigned to speech in work contexts. Non-local corporations frequently introduce their own language-use patterns, including corporate training session discourse, business jargon, or electronically-mediated communications which are unfamiliar to most community members and, therefore, are a potential source of analytical bias.

Critical to understanding how differences in work communication occur is to recognize that residents organize work communication into different types of speaking practices, each having its own speech structurings, setting preferences, task-type, and participant role configurations. The speaking practice most similar to the one implied by Stephenson’s anecdote is a subtype of “work talk” that I have labeled “helpin’ out” situations, that is, situations in which culturally-recognized co-equals assist, or “help out” someone in completing a task or set of tasks.<sup>4</sup> Wages may or may not be involved.

“Helpin’ out” situations do permit certain kinds of imperatives, and they also require that the participants preferably be of the same gender because members of the same sex can be presumed to have access to similar knowledge and skill bases (Beaver 1989; Hicks 1976; Ray 1983). This requirement reproduces a culturally-valued genderization of labor

in which men tend to do men's tasks and women tend to do women's tasks, and it perpetuates assumptions of a gendered task egalitarianism in which participants are presumed to be fully equal in their ability to perform them and in which no participant has the "right" to direct the actions of another.<sup>5</sup>

The actual work should be performed with a minimal number of speech directives of any form, as an absence of commands, orders, demands, or any other form of directive indexes a higher level of work skill and ability among the laborers, showing that they all know what to do and when. It also frees them to engage more fully in other forms of speaking such as conversation, jokes, or gossip. When directives are used, the preferred form is a "let's" or "we" clause form in which the speaker includes himself through use of the first person plural pronoun and suggests the asking of permission through a "let" form:

- (1) Let us pray. [preacher at church service]
- (2) Let's, let's us three go upstairs an I can tell some jokes. [18 year-old boy in joke-telling session with younger siblings and researcher]
- (3) Can you sit down a few minutes? Let's sit down. [cook to other kitchen worker]
- (4) Come on Pedro, let's go git a load a boxes. [teenage male mover to other teenage male mover; no compliance—considered joking in response to overhearing an exchange between two other men]
- (5) Let's git out a here Clyde fore we git drove. (51B:272) [same as (4)]
- (6) Let's see, mostly I guess, insurance. [clinic receptionist to researcher in giving instructions]
- (7) Let's see, do you reckon we could throw this at Bill? [teenage mover to another teenage mover, both male]
- (8) Let's not trap Bill in thare, he might not like it much [same as (7)]
- (9) Let's see if we can tighten this stuff up. [same as (7)]
- (10) Let's git all this stuff squared away. [same as (7)]
- (11) We could move it over thare. [same as (7)]<sup>6</sup>

When work-related imperatives are used, they must reference some aspect of doing the task itself, and the speaker must either be in a position such that he cannot perform the task himself (for example, "pass the salt" at the dinner table) or be performing a complex task with others so that labor coordination is necessary (for example, building a house).

Failure to use imperatives under these task constraints when in a helping out situation results in the addressee interpreting the directive as an "order," which in turn violates task-egalitarian constraints:

A cook at the environmental center entered the dining area to sweep, a routine task performed by whoever was "free" to do it. A guest lingering in the dining area told her she "ought to wipe the tables." The cook entered the kitchen area angry, saying the woman "had no right to tell me what to do."<sup>7</sup>

In this example, the guest was not a co-participant in the task and therefore violated the cook's helping-out imperative rules of use. The result was a violation of the cultural norms of the cook regarding imperative use. When such interpretations of work imperatives as orders occur, some form of non-compliance behavior invariably results, whether it be anger and withdrawal, as with the above example, or hostility and property destruction, as with the Stephenson anecdote.

It is not enough to know about the necessary structurings of imperatives and other speech forms that constitute "helpin' out" discourse; we must also understand the mechanism by which the speech itself recreates cultural norms within the actual events in which it is used. The assumption here is that there are signaling properties of routine "helpin' out" discourse forms which reproduce key contextual meanings every time they are uttered, creating strong associative relations between the utterance and the contextual meanings it signals. These routine forms, such as an appropriately used "let's," become sound units which evoke expectations of mutually present non-speech components or factors. These learned associations created or reproduced time and time again in situations of speech use are different from the referential (or semantic) meanings of the words in a clause or sentence. Just as a policeman's wearing of a uniform signifies his assumed law enforcing role, these associative meanings become invariant and expected. In the case of "helpin' out" imperatives, they construct core and constitutive relations between speech, type of task, task behavior, and participant relations.

For "helpin' out" discourse forms, these associations, or indices (Levinson 1983), center around configurations of "rights," "place," and "claims" relations.<sup>8</sup> "Rights" focus around divinely-sanctioned behavior according to gender as legitimated by consensual interpretation of King James scripture. A work situation such as house building, for example, must index a man's "right" to perform such a task. As the most primitive of indexical relations created in work contexts, "rights" relations must be met in order for a culturally normative work relation to be in effect. If a person's actions aren't "right," as when a woman wants to do "men's work," then these pragmatic indexical relations are broken and "helpin' out" discourse becomes inappropriate or must be reconfigured into another speaking practice in which different but appropriate relations are constructed.

"Place" relations, on the other hand, are socially constructed as

residents negotiate over time a position or role within a task network, usually made up of extended family members. These relations often determine who takes the task-directing initiative in a "helpin' out" context, and reproduction of these pragmatic indexical relations in work contexts facilitates replication of a cohesive working unit and of a synchronization of effort according to individual skills, abilities, and personalities.

"Claims" relations, the third relation indexed in "helpin' out" work discourse, is a relationship based upon reciprocity associations in which the participants have performed valued services or given valued goods to each other without monetary charge. Ash Creek residents "claim" various neighbors and kin according to the value given to these exchanges and the frequency with which they occur. "Helpin'" someone "out" creates or reinforces these relations by the simple act of laboring. Wage-laboring situations, as in local trucking or coal mining, replicate these rights, place, and claims relations as most workers are from the area and enculturated into these "helpin' out" patterns.

Consequently "helpin' out" contexts are core socioeconomic events within Ash Creek, replicating bonding relations among task participants which ensure future expectations of return services. When imperatives occurring within these contexts are inappropriately used, the resulting "order" interpretations break these relationships, resulting in potential threats to the social order and calling into question the cultural identity of the addressee. As "orders" are appropriately used only between marked cultural unequals, such as parents to children or, under certain contextual conditions, men to women, these reconfigurations are interpreted by the worker as an attempt by the addresser to imply that the worker, if male, is either a child or a woman; if female, that she is a child. These interpretations then result in worker non-compliance due to failure to acknowledge a culturally appropriate identity, as evidenced in the Stephenson narrative which began this discussion.

Returning to this narrative, we can now reanalyze it as a situation in which the indices, or pragmatics, of the work situation were violated. In a government construction job in which long-term mutual knowledge about the role or roles of task participants within a working network is probably absent, place and claims relations can be presumed to be weak, so a "helpin' out" context cannot be configured by the participants in this instance. Nor can they be created through the speech used within it if participants do not share a common system of pragmatics when they make requests of each other. From a culturally-normative perspective, money alone would be an insufficient motivator in such task-focused contexts to create or replace the place and claims relations demanded by appropriate imperative uses.<sup>9</sup> Therefore the worker had little cultural motivation to perform the task at hand, a motivation which was not

increased by the supervisor's inability to use imperatives in a culturally appropriate manner.

Consequently, the supervisor's remark, "Why don't you get another and watch it chase the first one down?" was reinterpreted as an order by the local man. (The embedded "you get another and watch it chase the first one down" is an imperative construction. Despite the initial tag "why don't," the sentence is therefore presumed to be an imperative by its intonation, as indicated by the gloss "gruffly," making the "?" inserted by Stephenson a transcriptional error.) The local man refused to accept the cultural meanings *he* associated with inappropriately-used imperatives. He then proceeded to correct the supervisor's use of requesting language by echoing the supervisor's order-like phrase "why don't"<sup>10</sup> and then amending it with the "let's" form in "why don't *let's* watch the wheelbarrow chase it," providing a lesson in culturally-accepted work language before abandoning an impossible work situation led by a man totally ignorant of how to construct appropriate work directives.

Currently, when those representing formal, hierarchically-organized institutional or corporate patterns of working behavior interface with those coming from rural Appalachian communities similar to Ash Creek, the common result is perpetuation of labor relations problems that encourage contestation and conflict, often similar to this incident recorded by Stephenson. Through examining how speech functions pragmatically within situations such as this one, a rather different explanation of Appalachian work relations emerges, one which is culturally sensitive and which offers a normative explanation for work behavior rather than a psychological or idiosyncratic one. It will be difficult to have a full understanding of how to communicate the nature of the problem to all involved or to promote recognition of work interpretation differences until we begin to focus on how speech itself conveys not just one cultural meaning but a plethora of cultural meanings when it is actually used by members of that culture. Studies of language in use do have direct applications for understandings of socioeconomic issues and for the political acts which invariably follow mis-interpretations of working behavior.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These techniques include audio-taping of speech in work settings, with the permission of the speakers, as well as hand-written recordings of speech instances and other cultural data commonly done in anthropological applications of participant observation. To conform to speakers' wishes and to ensure as much confidentiality as possible, no video recordings were made. A total of about 160 usable hours of audio tape was obtained, involving approximately one hundred different speakers. Most audio data were collected from a core of about twenty-



five speakers under similar sampling conditions such as time, location, and setting. Audio data were subjected to classification into an inventory of discourse types, such as work talk, conversation, story-telling, gossip, and greetings. Pertinent data applicable to speech acts under work conditions were transcribed using a linguistically-sensitive system which recognized key dialectal features.

<sup>2</sup> What data were actually available to be collected was influenced by gender, as would be expected in rural mountain communities. In terms of collecting speech act data, I was able to watch men work, help them with fetching supplies or tools, or simply listen in as I performed another task at the periphery of their activity. At the same time, I was able to participate fully in women's activities, obtaining data that would have been excluded to a man should he have attempted to visit homes or other women's domains without other men being present.

<sup>3</sup> Support for this research was provided by a National Science Foundation Dissertation Grant, BNS-8516273, and by Berea College through a Mellon Foundation Appalachian Studies Fellowship.

<sup>4</sup> Labels for types of speech used in work contexts are derived from what residents themselves call such events. For example, talk used when a group of workers are actually performing a task together occurs in a context that residents routinely label as "helping [NAME OF PERSON RECEIVING THE BENEFIT OF THE LABOR] out." If a group of local men, usually kin, assist someone named Joe in building a shed, they are likely to refer to this activity as "helpin' Joe out."

<sup>5</sup> This assumption of egalitarianism does not mean that task specialization is avoided. Indeed, most residents assert special skill at one or a few types of work. Rather, the presumption is that any man (or woman) has equal access to the knowledge and skill necessary to perform a task. This assumption leads to such statements as "I could do that if I had to" or "I reckon I can figure it out."

<sup>6</sup> These speech examples are segments transcribed from confidential audio tapes of community residents recorded from June 1985 through August 1987. Efforts have been made in the transcription process to mask both the identity of the speakers and the time and location in which the speech was recorded. In keeping with standard linguistic anthropological procedures, these tapes are not available in "raw" form to anyone without written permission from the recorded speakers and the author. Should a reader wish to make further inquiries about these tapes, please contact the author.

<sup>7</sup> This example is an edited excerpt from fieldnotes recorded in late summer of 1985. As with audio-recorded speech examples, this passage has been edited to protect the name, location, and time of the event. Fieldnotes are also confidential; inquiries should be directed to the author.

<sup>8</sup> The terms "rights," "place," and "claims" were derived from expressions or phrases used repeatedly by residents in conversation about others' laboring

behavior. For example, I was told early in my fieldwork by a local woman that it may be my "right" as a woman to "help her out" by taking her home from a church picnic, but it really wasn't my "place" to do so; it was the place of a family member to assist her. Others, however, were more willing to "let" me transport them or their children, especially as I became more known in the community. This variation allowed me to ask about "place" relations and to elicit discussions about it. Similarly, as the field time become extended, I was able to ask about "claiming" someone and elicit discussion about this term as well.

<sup>9</sup> Even today, nearly thirty years after Stephenson's North Carolina study, many residents in Ash Creek will not willingly wage-labor in situations in which rights, claims, and place relations cannot apply, preferring instead to work locally under someone who can be "placed" or to network regionally to work with kin or through the recommendation of kin.

<sup>10</sup> A number of studies on English imperatives have noted that certain intonation forms and embedding of imperative forms within interrogative structures can all be interpreted in speech as imperatives, even if the grammatical form does not appear to be one on the surface (see, for example, Davies 1986; Ervin-Tripp 1976; Levinson 1983).

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# **Southwest Virginia High School Graduates: Crossing Cultural Terrains in the University Setting**

**Pam B. Cole**

## **Introduction**

Mom graduated high school, but Dad, he just made it to the third grade; he skipped school a lot because he had to work in the fields so they would have food to eat. I think he was fifteen and in the third grade, and he just quit. And I see how it's affected him. He's never read a book before, and I can't imagine that, and I just want to do so much better than him. He always led me to believe that I was smart, and that I could do anything that I wanted to do. I want him to be proud of me (Chris 1993).

The words above were spoken by a first-year university student who grew up in the Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia. Chris and three of his high school classmates—John, Sandy, and Jarrod—enrolled together in a large university immediately following graduation from an all-white high school located in a small coal mining community.<sup>1</sup> During their first semester as freshmen, these four students became participants in an ethnographic study of the ways in which they constructed their identities in the university setting.

Chris and his classmates initially talked quite exuberantly about the encouragement they received from family, friends, and former teachers to attend the university. Chris's father was an illiterate, disabled coal miner who wanted to see his son "do so much better" than he himself had. His positive attitude toward education played an instrumental role

in Chris's decision to pursue a degree in engineering. Likewise, Jarrod's decision to pursue a career in architecture was initially supported by his father who had spent his entire life working inside a coal mine and, as a result, wanted a better life for his son. Jarrod talked about watching his father labor and "grow old before his time" under the oppressive conditions of a coal miner's life. His mother, too, was a tremendous influence. At the time of the study she worked as a school janitor to help finance his education. All in all, these students brought to the university a strong sense of family, neighborliness, and personal identity. They had a great deal of pride in their Appalachian identities and were greatly motivated to do well in college.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, pride in their Appalachian identities began to subside shortly after they entered the university. The students found themselves immersed in a dominant group that was less paternalistic and more bureaucratic, more elaborate in its speech codes, and more diverse in its thinking and experiences than their high school peer group. In this new environment, the students had to renegotiate their identities. Kondo points out that "identity is not a fixed 'thing,' it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings" and is heavily influenced by the power relations of the group (1990, 24). Though individuals constantly construct identities within their own cultural groups, neophytes, unfamiliar with the prevailing ways of a "new" group culture, renegotiate their identities in ways that are frequently in opposition to the norms of their native group. In so doing, they often acquiesce to prevailing group norms in order to gain acceptance. These students, unfamiliar with the university, renegotiated their identities in ways that were in opposition to their Appalachian identities. The differences they encountered frequently made them feel marginalized, disempowered, and stigmatized. As they renegotiated their identities, they struggled between remaining loyal to their stigmatized Appalachian identities and trying to pass as "normal" in order to gain membership in the dominant group. As a result, they began feeling ambivalent toward their native culture.

## **Displacement**

Research findings suggest that schools are a source of identity and pride in more homogeneous rural communities (Gotts and Purnell 1986). By participating in high school events the students affirmed community membership and life. However, they felt overwhelmed by the bureaucratic nature and the size of the university. After attending a rural high school serving approximately 230 white students (Grades 7-12), they were shocked by the number and diversity of students enrolled in university classes. It was common for classes to have three hundred to six hundred students from various ethnic backgrounds.

Many of their high school classes had fewer than ten pupils. Consequently, the students frequently received one-on-one attention from their teachers, with whom they had developed close relationships. This level of attention was absent at the university. Classrooms, Jarrod remarked, were “movie theaters” where students simply observed “an act in motion” (1993). The impersonal nature of the university setting affected the way they viewed themselves. As Sandy put it, she was no longer “an individual. I was just one of many numbers on the university campus” (1993a). Professors, John asserted, never seemed to have time to talk with them. Professors sometimes told the students their names were irrelevant, and they should not even bother putting them on their papers—social security numbers were sufficient (Group Interview 1993).

These students also struggled with renegotiating their peer identities. Though they were frequently viewed as being “asocial,” they assumed their hesitancy to establish new friendships was actually a result of the way they viewed friendships. The students felt that because they came from a community where “everyone knows everyone else” and where the unvarying nature of the community allowed friendships to deepen and evolve over time, they made friends quite differently than did many of their university peers. They were surprised by how quickly other students either joined or created cliques. Friendships, they believed, were lifelong commitments, not to be taken superficially and not to be developed too hastily. The students, therefore, approached new relationships in an ambiguous manner. Though Jarrod and Sandy were more extroverted than Chris and John and moved into new relationships quicker, they described their newfound friends as “acquaintances” and made apologetic comments concerning their new relationships. “I know it’s a shallow way to be,” Jarrod would frequently remark when discussing his new friendships. Sandy agreed:

I’m makin’ a lot of new friends, well, not really friends.  
Hopefully, one day they will be as close as my friends at home.  
But new people can’t replace friends that I went to kindergarten  
with and played sports with and basically spent my entire  
childhood and adolescence with (1993b).

John and Chris, more cautious in establishing new friendships, sometimes alienated themselves from other students. They hesitated becoming friends with “strangers” for fear they would make friends with the wrong crowd. Instead, they sought reassurance in one another’s company. “The reason we’re taking this so well,” John asserted, “is because we have each other to talk to. I don’t know if they [indicating the other three] weren’t up here, if I would have stayed” (1993a).

In addition to struggling with peer identity, these students quickly began viewing their educational identities as inadequate when compared

to those of others; as a result, they felt displaced and marginalized in the classroom. Though all four students came to the university with high marks and were very much concerned about their academic performance, they began acknowledging academic experiences other students had which they lacked. John commented, for example, that other students were better prepared for lab work and, because his school lacked the materials to perform experiments, he was behind the other students. Sandy talked about the lack of advanced math courses in her high school. If she had been given the opportunity to take additional math courses, she would not be struggling in her college calculus class. All of them reported feeling “slighted” or “cheated” when other students made comments like “Oh, this is going to be easy” or “We did this in high school” when they themselves had been denied that experience. In one group interview, John summed up their feelings:

We haven’t did that stuff. They [other students] have on-hand experience with stuff that we don’t have, so we have to work that much harder than they do because they’ve already had some knowledge that we have to learn new—which gives them an edge over us which isn’t really fair, and sometimes it makes us angry, but there’s not much we can do about it. Just work harder, I guess (Group Interview 1993).<sup>3</sup>

The students’ greatest challenge dealt with renegotiating their intellectual and linguistic selves. They recounted a number of situations in which other students teased them about their intelligence and/or manner of speaking. Typical comments were “We thought all you people were stupid” and “We all thought that all of you talked real slow, and you didn’t know anything.” The students remarked that though their peers made the comments in a cordial manner, they sometimes felt marginalized by the statements. An early interview with two students illustrates the manner in which they felt put down for their style of speaking:

Jarrold: When you get up here you like say somethin’, and they go “Did you hear that? Say that again. Did you hear that?”

John: Yeah. This one guy said, “Say somethin’.” I said, “Like what?” And he goes, “Did you hear that? LIKE WHAT!” It just gets on your nerves sometimes, and then when I first got up here nobody could understand the way I pronounce my first name, and I finally just had to let ——— pronounce it for them, and they still didn’t get it. I mean, what’s so hard about ———?

Jarrold: This one guy thought that ———’s last name was Musilix. I don’t know how he got Musilix from ———.

John: Me and —— are gettin' used to answerin' to ——.  
[Both young men, though unrelated, have the same last name. In their community, the accent is placed on the first syllable; outsiders place the accent on the second syllable.]

Jarrold: Yeah. So whenever somebody asks me my last name, I say —— [Places accent on the last syllable.] I always said in elementary and high school that I would never do that, but when you're up here you don't have any choice.

John: Yeah. It's no use.

Jarrold: If you say ——, it's like "What did you say?" So we have to change it (Group Interview 1993).

Though the students believed they did not encounter any situations in which they felt blatant acts of ridicule, they admitted that subtle forms of ridicule—exemplified by the previous dialogue exchange—reminded them they were different and made them feel put down and disempowered.<sup>4</sup> Thus, to gain membership and acceptance, they felt the need to readjust their speech patterns to match those of the dominant group.

Juxtaposing the experiences and/or opportunities they had at home with those of their university peers also made the students feel inferior. Phrases such as "more culturally rounded," "less culturally developed," and "culturally deprived" laced their discourse about their own personal experiences. "I did not realize how little I had never done in my life," Chris remarked, "until I came to college and started listening to other students around me talking about where they had been and what all they had done" (1993). Jarrold commented:

I was talkin' to a bunch of friends last night, and it made me realize that bein' from a small place we're like so much further behind, you know, than all these other people, and we're so much less rounded than they are. I talked to them for about three hours, and they were just talkin' about so many things they had did and so many places they had went. In a way I feel cheated that they've did stuff that I've not, but, you know, I just try to put it out of my mind because there's really nothin' I can do about it, so I try to not let it bother me (1993).

## **Forging an Identity**

All four students enrolled in the university with some understanding of the negative stereotypes that are associated with the Appalachian region. Despite this knowledge, none of the students initially believed they would have ever felt stigmatized because of their Appalachian



identities. As Jarrod remarked, "I thought that they [society] thought that we were really stupid, but it never really bothered me before. But now, they make me feel so insignificant and dumb. And I don't like that" (1993).

Goffman (1963) explains that people who deviate from the norm acquire techniques to manage what he calls "spoiled identities." The students reported ways in which they began managing the stigmatism associated with their "spoiled" identities. They learned to conceal their uniqueness by forging socially acceptable identities, one of many management strategies pointed out by Granfield (1991), Marshall (1985), and Pfuhl (1986).

The students, for instance, often found themselves hiding their Appalachian identities by saying as little as possible about their home communities. Though the students could refrain from talking about their home communities, their distinct Southwest Virginia dialects were much less avoidable. Though they perceived dialect as a veneer feature of the cultural world, an inflated way of seeking membership in an "elite" group, the students agreed that in order to gain membership and status in their new setting, they had to alter their dialect. Not gaining membership in the dominant group, as Chris said, "was the worst curse of man." Thus, the students began copying the language of those around them. They talked quite frequently about "hearing their own language change" and how they began finding themselves almost subconsciously shifting to what they called a more "proper" way of speaking when they were talking with those outside their indigenous cultural group. By the end of their first semester, all four students had altered much of their Appalachian dialect.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ambivalence**

Goffman (1963) coined the expression "identity ambivalence" for describing the emotional conflict that arises when an individual tries to embrace one culture and release another. Early in the first semester, the students began talking about the difficulties of returning home. Once these students experienced the social norms of the university setting, returning to their indigenous roots became problematic. Though they generally felt good about their new identities, they felt far removed from their high school peers and their former lives when they returned to their home communities. "I feel like I'm living in a sound proof room when I'm back there; no one actually hears me, and really, I'm not so sure I hear them," John remarked (1993b). For all four students, their changing dialect and their more diverse ways of thinking created a barrier between them and their former friends. Time away from home, they realized, marked them as elite outsiders. Jarrod problemized his situation:

I've already noticed though that my accent has changed some since I've been up here. 'Cause they [high school friends] like make fun of me. And I went home last weekend and ——— and ——— [high school friends] would hear me say some stuff, they would make fun of me. They would say like "You think you're bad now, don't you? You've changed your accent!" (Group Interview 1993).

The identity transformations that the students began experiencing also created tensions between the students and their family members. Chris mentioned his struggle to understand what he now felt were his parents' racist attitudes. Though he tried to discuss his feelings with his parents, he no longer felt capable of "talking on the same wave length with them" and insisted that there was no longer a place for him in his former community. John talked about how he now felt more open to different religious beliefs, but his parents were simply devastated that he wished to attend a nondenominational church. Overall, the students felt helpless in dealing with these conflicts.

Despite their best efforts, the students had difficulty disengaging from their previous identities. "Sometimes," Chris remarked, "it's a relief for just the four of us to be together. 'Cause then we can let our guard down and be ourselves" (Group Interview 1993). Though the students conceded that a shift in dialect was inescapable, such a shift created dissension between their Appalachian identities and the new identities they were constructing. The students saw this vernacular shift as a disloyalty to their Appalachian identities but, at the same time, they felt powerless to do anything about it. As Jarrod said, "You understand that you are betraying who you are, but you want to be more accepted." John made a similar point: "I know at times that I talk different on purpose. I guess it's really bad. I shouldn't be like that, but I just don't want to be made fun of" (Group Interview 1993). All in all, the students felt a sense of guilt as they forged "acceptable" identities.

### **Resolving Ambivalence**

All four students sought membership in the university setting by "passing," by forging socially acceptable identities. As they did this they began to resolve the ambivalence they felt by constructing negative views of their Appalachian identities. They began seeing their former identities as "fixed" realities and began appreciating multiple perspectives. As John remarked, "Now, I don't judge others. I wasn't as open minded in high school. I'm more so now" (1993b). In a final interview, Chris made a similar point when talking about how he felt he had changed:

Chris: One thing, I was culturally deprived. Like black people . . . or anything you don't know anything about you're afraid of. Before I never had any contact with any of them. But I've met probably more nice black people here than I have white. Before I used the stereotypes. I didn't trust them. I didn't trust anybody. Just the people I already knew. That was just me; now I know that was wrong.

Interviewer: What's made you change?

Chris: I guess just actually experiencing. Just being around them. And just talkin' to them. They're just like we are. Skin color doesn't mean anything (1993).

As the students observed their own attitudes changing, they began critically observing attitudes in their native culture. Sandy remarked:

I don't wanna go back there. Just being here makes me see how narrow-minded everyone is at home. That's ridiculous. And I don't think kids should be brought up in a place like that. People there are too old-fashioned and are just not up for new ideas. At home everything has to be one way, and people can't be different. You have to be like everyone else or you're ridiculed because you're not (1993b).

The students felt negatively about the lack of diversity in their home town and characterized their indigenous culture as narrow-minded. Thus, they felt ambivalent about returning home and raising their own families.

## Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the oppression that four students from Southwest Virginia experienced as they crossed cultural terrains in the university setting. Stigmatized by their Appalachian identities, the students sought membership in the academic setting by forging identities that were socially acceptable. However, in their efforts to "pass" as members of the dominant group, the students experienced identity ambivalence. They resolved their ambivalence by constructing negative views of their former identities and of their cultural heritage.

Limitations exist to this study. The small number of participants makes it impossible to generalize the findings to other Appalachian youth. Others may have had similar or quite different experiences. Further research needs to be conducted with larger populations of students to see if the findings of this study are common to Appalachian youth and/or other children with rural identities. Furthermore, the duration of the study was limiting in itself. Can the students resolve the

negative feelings about their Appalachian identities? A longer study would address this question and might see how the students' attitudes toward their Appalachian identities evolve with time.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Students' names have been changed to protect their privacy.

<sup>2</sup> Both Sandy and John talked about how it was always "understood" that they would attend college. Their parents always emphasized the importance of a college education in securing a good job.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. note: Due to the nature and content of this paper Standard English corrections have not been made to quoted dialogue.

<sup>4</sup> Sandy stated on a number of occasions that she felt she was less affected by comments than were the other students.

<sup>5</sup> Sandy and Jarrod entered the university with a less pronounced Appalachian dialect; consequently changes in their dialects were less noticeable.

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# Teaching for Democracy: Reflections On Teaching Appalachian Studies

Shaunna L. Scott

A long tradition of thought in the fields of education, social theory, and Appalachian studies conceives of education as the cornerstone for the construction of a democratic society and for the achievement of social justice and human liberation (see, for instance, Agger 1991; Dewey [1927] 1988; Freire [1968] 1983; Gramsci 1971; Habermas 1971, in social theory; and Einstein 1982; Fisher, Foster, and Harnish 1982; Lewis 1982, in Appalachian studies). According to arguments advanced by these writers, education provides students with the information and skills necessary for them to function as citizens in a democracy: to make informed policy and electoral decisions, to engage in dialogue, to solve problems, to think critically, and, perhaps most important, to imagine alternatives to the status quo. Teaching, then, is a political act. What we teach and how we teach it has important political consequences.

In my own discipline of sociology, the politics of teaching is particularly transparent. Classical theorists such as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons reaffirm society, while others like Karl Marx and Max Weber critique it. In spite of these differences, it remains the case that all of the dominant theoretical perspectives are elitist, ethnocentric, and androcentric. Put simply, they were written by, for, and about a relatively privileged group of white, European men. During the 1960s and 1970s, the field of sociology moved beyond an intellectual recognition of this fact and began to engage in rather vigorous debate over the discipline's political implications and, more specifically, over how sociology should be practiced and taught. This debate, though ongoing, has transformed our field in significant ways.

First, there has been a rapid growth in sociological self-critique, which has resulted in an expanding body of literature on the sociology of knowledge. Second, as teachers, sociologists have sought to replace hierarchical, authoritarian pedagogical models which place professors in an expert role, requiring us to dispense knowledge to passive students via lectures. We have furthermore modified our curriculum: first, by adding components on race and gender to the standard courses on social inequality and stratification; and second, by formulating independent courses and sub-disciplinary specialties which concentrate primarily upon race and gender. Over the last decade, sociologists have pushed the project one step further, arguing that race, gender, and, as always, class are constitutive of U.S. society, academia, and sociology as well as our own individual experiences and identities as educators and students. Therefore, they must be integrated into the very core of our curriculum, not ghettoized into separate courses or a single week of the semester.

There are obvious parallels between sociology and Appalachian studies, owing both to the nature of these intellectual enterprises and to their co-existence in similar social and cultural contexts. The same social forces and intellectual currents responsible for the diversification of sociology throughout the 1960s and 1970s were also responsible for the institutional emergence of the interdisciplinary field of Appalachian studies. The timing and context of Appalachian studies' emergence accounts for a remarkably widespread use of experiential, democratic pedagogical and research methods. I argue this, in spite of Helen Lewis's complaint that Appalachian studies had become "academized" (1982, 166). Compared to other academic programs, Appalachian studies programs have maintained an activist-applied orientation and have consistently struggled against the forces which push educators toward elitist, authoritarian teaching and research (see, for instance, Banks, Billings, and Tice 1993; Couto 1986; Couto et al. 1986; Fisher, Foster, and Harnish 1982; Lewis and Gaventa 1988; Lewis and O'Donnell 1990a, 1990b; Silver 1991; Tice, Billings, and Banks 1993; but also Einstein 1982).

Appalachian studies has also provided us with a rich critical literature addressing questions of underdevelopment and poverty, regional and ethnic identity, cultural difference, stereotypes, and other issues surrounding Appalachia's relationship with the "outside" world: the national and global economy, the federal government, and American popular culture (often accessed through mass media). Books which I regard as classics in our field—Harry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* (1962), the Lewis et al. volume on the colonial and world systems models (Lewis, Johnson, and Askins 1978), Henry Shapiro's intellectual history of the conceptualization of Appalachia (1978), Ron Eller's work on the industrialization of the region (1982), David

Whisnant's work on the politics of culture (1983), and Altina Waller's investigation of the Hatfield-McCoy feud (1988)—all offer Appalachian students relevant information and, equally important, critical and potentially empowering frameworks through which to view their region and themselves.

Texts such as these open up a terrain upon which Appalachian students may challenge culturally- and environmentally-deterministic paradigms which locate the source of regional problems either with the people or with an intractable mountainous terrain. Obviously, such paradigms are politically paralyzing to us as citizens. Grounding regional poverty and powerlessness in the environment naturalizes social inequality to the point at which it seems almost inevitable. It does so by turning our attention away from the ways in which regional problems are also socially constructed through a particular pattern of capitalist development and its articulation with outside sources of capital and outside markets. Such environmental determinism leaves us with two alternatives: radical alteration of our landscape or out-migration. The logic of the second discourse, which places the blame for regional problems on the people and their culture, stigmatizes Appalachians and disqualifies us from participating as equals in a democratic, public discourse on the fate of our nation, region, and selves. After all, who cares about the opinions of backward, impoverished, uneducated, clan-ish, and overly-violent hillbillies?

Thus, by linking conceptualizations and stereotypes of Appalachia to the broader structural and ideological processes through which American national identity was forged (Shapiro 1978) and through which certain groups acquired wealth and power in an expanding capitalist state (Caudill 1962; Eller 1982; Lewis, Johnson, and Askins 1978; Waller 1988; Whisnant 1980, 1983), the Appalachian studies literature helps us to foster a critical consciousness amongst Appalachian students. And, since this critical consciousness is necessary for the construction of a democratic polity at the local, state, regional, and national levels (Agger 1991; Habermas 1971), I value the contribution of this segment of the Appalachian studies literature greatly. Indeed, these books continue to form a core element of my Appalachian studies courses.

Yet, I would argue that Appalachian educators should not stop with the construction of a positive basis for regional identity and a critique of American democracy and economy. As important as these goals are, they are not sufficient. Indeed, if we do stop here, we run the danger of acquiring a self-congratulatory, culturally-based superiority complex, in which we appear as virtuous and blameless "folk" while all of our problems are blamed upon "outsiders," as others have previously argued (see, for instance, Whisnant 1982). This is a tendency I must constantly fight in my own Appalachian studies courses where students alternate be-



tween embracing the "Appalachia is good" paradigm or elaborating an extreme cultural relativism in which no value judgments or political decisions can be made. Both positions, while attractive and understandable, undermine the project of local and regional critique which is also requisite for the construction of critical consciousness, democratic polity, and transformative change.

One way to facilitate such a local and regional critique is to engage willingly and honestly in our own self-critique, thereby offering a model of self-critique and self-reflexivity to our students. For example, I usually share with students my own elitist, middle-class, town-based biases which once caused me to be embarrassed by my paternal grandmother's lack of education and her use of non-standard English. These biases also provided me with a basis upon which to feel superior to my poorer, less educated, rural-dwelling kin and neighbors whom I was more than willing to stereotype and dismiss. Since my students come from similar backgrounds and usually share these biases, this self-critique usually leads them to recognize and discuss how they, too, participate in and benefit from the place-based and class-based hierarchies created through American capitalism and culture. There are so many excellent resources for initiating a discussion of class and town-country inequality in Appalachia that it is not possible to list them all here. Excellent sources include Stephen Fisher's "Life with Father: Reflections on Class Analysis" (1983-4), Allen Batteau's "Mosbys and Broomsedge: The Semantics of Class in an Appalachian Kinship System" (1982), and Robert Coles's *Migrants, Sharecroppers, Mountaineers* (1967) in conjunction with his *Privileged Ones* (1977).

Of course, the consideration of class-based inequality and exploitation as well as the structural relationship between core and periphery has always been at the center of Appalachian studies discourse. One would be hard-pressed to teach a course on the history, politics, or sociology of Appalachia without attending to these topics. On the other hand, the consideration of two other important axes of inequality and exploitation in the United States—gender and race—have not always been so high on our interdisciplinary agenda (Maggard 1986).<sup>1</sup> To teach about gender and race in Appalachia, then, is to extend even further our original projects of understanding regional social problems, of explaining, contextualizing, and debunking Appalachian stereotypes, and of empowering our students. In short, we must facilitate and articulate a critique of Appalachian studies.

An obvious method of accomplishing this task is to examine critically Appalachian studies classics, both for their inclusion of women, African Americans, and other ethnic minorities and for their recognition of gender and race as culturally constructed systems of social stratification. Springboards for this endeavor include the work of Mary Anglin (1993),

Jacqueline Dowd Hall (1986), Sally Maggard (1990), Mary Beth Pudup (1990), Michael Yarrow (1986; In progress), and myself (Scott 1994; 1995) on gender as well as the work of Edward J. Cabbell (1985), Ron Lewis (1987), Joe William Trotter, Jr. (1990), and William H. Turner (1985) on race.

To bring these issues to life for the students, however, intellectual exercises such as these should be supplemented with other activities: discussions of current newspaper articles or letters to the editor; reflections on sexism and racism in our Appalachian home towns, institutions of higher learning, and American society in general; oral histories, fieldwork, or internships related to these topics; or discussions of fiction, TV shows, or films depicting race and gender in Appalachia. Films such as "Harlan County, U.S.A." (Koppel 1976), "Harriet Simpson Arnow" (Smith 1987), and "Fast Food Women" (Johnson 1991) help us recover an active presence and voice for Appalachian women who so often appear marginal to historical and sociological works on the region. The 1990 film "Trouble Behind," which documents the racist legacy of Corbin, Kentucky, is quite helpful in eliciting discussion and debate among students (Henson 1990). And, last but not least, Appalachian novels, short stories, and poetry provide those of us in history and social science with additional opportunities to encourage discussion and reflection on women and gender amongst our students. I, for instance, have always found it quite instructive to juxtapose literary images of women, such as James Still's character Mother in *River of Earth* ([1940] 1978) and Harriet Arnow's character the dollmaker ([1954] 1985), with the "real live" women in our students' lives and with women as they appear in ethnography, oral history, and other academic representations.

Integrating race and gender into the Appalachian studies curriculum involves more than just adding units on women, blacks, Cherokees, or eastern and southern European immigrants to our syllabi, as Steve Fisher advocated over a decade ago (Fisher, Foster, and Harnish 1982). It means that we recognize that race and gender are at least as important as Appalachian ethnic identity in organizing social relations, informing personal identity, and propelling systems of social stratification *within* our region, communities, and homes. The integration of race and gender into Appalachian studies programs is particularly important in light of the economic shifts and public policies of the 1980s, which have resulted in a regional transformation of gender roles and a national increase in xenophobia and race hate crimes. The integration of race and gender into our curriculum, therefore, represents a very important step in our journey toward creating a more inclusive, democratic, and relevant Appalachian studies curriculum for our students and ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> My list is not exhaustive, of course. We should also consider other axes of inequality and exploitation, most obviously sexual orientation and age.

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# **Gender and Schooling in Appalachia: Lessons for an Era of Economic Restructuring**

**Sally Ward Maggard**

## **Introduction**

A central tenet of the Clinton administration policy for economic improvement is to retrain the existing work force and educate new labor force entrants for jobs in a high wage, high skill, high productivity economy. It is argued such labor force preparedness will attract and hold internationally mobile capital investment. The multiple threats to workers and communities of factory relocation, wage and benefit reductions, and part-time, contingent jobs will be reduced or eliminated.

This assumption that workforce preparedness will anchor mobile capital is untested, but even if one accepts it, many questions remain. What does it mean to "retool" a labor force for the jobs of the future? What is the mix of programs for training existing workers and educating new entrants? Can the decentralized American education system respond? In Central Appalachia, the overpowering question is how does one connect the national agenda to communities once dominated by natural resource extraction where unemployment today runs as high as 25 percent of the work force?

This article considers the complexity of designing new job training and education programs in Central Appalachia in an era of global economic transformation. It examines patterns of economic change and educational attainment, women's experiences as they attend school and try to acquire marketable skills, and lessons from previous job training

and educational programs. From this it draws conclusions about ways to link national policy to the realities of Central Appalachia.

A major portion of the article analyzes the public school and job training experiences of working class women in Eastern Kentucky. The author's original research on women's participation in two union organizing drives in the early 1970s generated data on schooling and work histories pertinent to new educational and labor force training initiatives.

## **Recent Economic Change in Appalachia**

Economic problems in Central Appalachia<sup>1</sup> resemble problems in other parts of the country, but the impact of restructuring here is often more acute than it is elsewhere. Data from West Virginia, the only state located entirely within the region, provide good examples of current economic trends in Central Appalachia.

### **Where have all the "good" jobs gone?**

While the total number of jobs in the West Virginia economy remained fairly stable from 1980 to 1991, the mix of jobs changed dramatically. High paying jobs in coal mining, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and financial services declined by 22.5 percent, while lower paying jobs in agriculture, retail and wholesale trade, and services increased 24.4 percent (WVTFCYF 1993, 16). From 1985 to 1990 mining employment fell 21.7 percent. Miners and communities dependent on mining wages suffer, but with the shift to new automated mining technology, productivity is at an all-time high in the industry (Maggard 1994a).

In contrast, West Virginia jobs in amusement services, apparel and accessory stores, eating and drinking places, and health services each increased by over 20 percent from 1985 to 1990 (Culp, Bingaman, and Witt 1991). With the recruitment of "back-office" operations to the state, new jobs opened up in data entry and processing, market research, telemarketing, customer service, and financial services (Maggard 1994a). In each sector experiencing job growth, jobs tend to be part-time, temporary, subcontracted, and non-union, and they tend to pay low wages, lack benefits, and lack job security.

Employers hire "contingent" workers on a part-time, temporary basis to avoid the costs of health insurance, sick leave, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, pensions, and retirement. Costs can be reduced an estimated 20 to 40 percent by hiring contingent labor (Callahan and Hartmann 1991). But recent data indicate that these labor force trends translate into poverty inside Appalachian households.

Median family income in West Virginia dropped by 3.9 percent from 1980 to 1990 (WVTFCYF 1993, 16), and households experienced an



overall reduced standard of living. West Virginia fell from 47th to 50th in per capita income over the decade (Center for Economic Research 1991, 3) and female headed families living in poverty increased by 11.6 percent (Lubman 1993a).

The state's "coal counties" are in crisis. Located in what used to be called the "Heart of the Billion Dollar Coalfields", McDowell County, for example, lost 72 percent of its high wage jobs from 1980 to 1991. This is a truly alarming statistic, but the county also lost 22 percent of its low wage jobs. Unemployment is 22.7 percent higher than the state average (11.4 percent in 1992) (Yoder 1993), and median income fell by 27.5 percent, from \$21,729 to \$15,756 in the county (WVTFCYF 1993, 43).

### **Where have all the people gone?**

Many people leave. Forty-four of West Virginia's fifty-five counties lost population over the last decade (U.S. Bureau of Census 1990), but new data indicate a reversal of this trend (Thompson 1993; Isserman and Sorenson 1994). Recent southern destination states and historical migration points such as midwestern cities are also experiencing restructuring, and migration is failing as an alternative to bad times in Central Appalachia. When laid off workers see their jobs relocated to countries like Mexico, they are deciding not to follow the jobs and to stay home (Ansley 1993). Although some experts argue that labor mobility is a special strength in the U.S. economy (Passell 1992), Appalachian workers increasingly disagree.

### **Who is the family breadwinner?**

Since early in the century, males have been the predominant household "breadwinners" in the region, but today they are joining the ranks of "discouraged" unemployed workers who give up looking for jobs and are officially counted as out of the labor market. In contrast, women in the region are moving into the paid labor force in ever larger numbers (Maggard 1994a, 19-20). The rate at which West Virginia women are entering the formal labor force may soon outstrip the rate of increase nationally among women. These shifts disrupt traditional household relationships. Fragmented data from literacy teachers, women's shelters, and social service agencies link these trends to an increase in domestic violence.

### **What is a "real" job today?**

The traditional model of employment in the U.S. has been of full-time, long-term, and family-waged work. White male working class, white collar, and professional workers have generally held such jobs (Ansley 1993, 1768, 1842-1843), and restructuring challenges this presumed norm for these groups. Today the dominant employment

model more closely resembles the work experiences of minority populations and women whose jobs have not provided economic security.

In response to the increase in economic insecurity, a wide range of non-standard economic activity is taking place at a grassroots level in Appalachia and other parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> This includes illegal work (marijuana and moonshine production, prostitution, drug sales, poaching), "self-provisioning" (picking berries, gardening, preserving food, raising livestock, hunting, cutting wood for fuel, scavenging coal, sewing), and other informal production and bartering (gathering ginseng and rattlesnakes, making crafts, repairing automobiles and machinery). Flea markets and yard sales have expanded into a thriving alternative economy, and other non-reported work is expanding.

Reciprocal work is wide spread, especially along kinship and neighborhood lines, as people share elder care, child care, invalid care, transportation, cash loans, job referrals, home repair, and home building. At a community level, people organize health clinics, child care, and youth programs, as well as oral history projects, industrial recruitment programs, economic seminars, and community self-assessment projects.

People combine these activities with other sources of income such as unemployment, worker's compensation, disability, welfare, food stamps, black lung benefits, and social security. Transfer payments rarely cover minimal household needs, so this "creative" but technically "illegal" combination of non-standard and other income is necessary to keep households solvent.

## **Barriers to a High-Skill Work Force**

Upgrading the skills and educational levels of the labor force are at the heart of federal economic growth policies. But Central Appalachia's educational attainment record and the experiences of its residents in public schools and manpower development programs suggest that new programs face severe challenges in the region.

### **Low educational attainment**

Central Appalachia has struggled for many decades with poorly funded public schools and high dropout rates. Challenges to school finance formulas in West Virginia and Kentucky have resulted in an infusion of new support for some poor school districts, and in West Virginia there has been progress since 1980 in reducing the percentage of high school dropouts (WVTFCYF 1993, 6-7). Still, in 1993 West Virginia ranked 48th nationally in the percentage of adults completing four years of high school (Zeller and Smith 1993). In McDowell County, 47 percent of men and 25 percent of women in the labor force in 1990 had not completed high school. Among men, 34 percent had not gone beyond high school. For women, the comparable figure was 46 percent

(U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). In McDowell and seven other coal counties, less than 55 percent of the population aged twenty-five and over had graduated from high school (Lubman 1993b).

### **The special case of women**

Recent Appalachian scholarship demonstrates the importance of analyzing gender relations and gender ideology in the region's history, culture, economy, and problems (Maggard 1994b). In terms of education, gender relations and their supportive ideologies create specific difficulties which push women to drop out of school and which hamper their efforts to return to school or benefit from job training programs.

Structured interviews conducted from 1986 through 1988 by the author with forty-four Eastern Kentucky women about work and educational experiences point to gender as a factor in school dropout rates, the low skill level of the labor force, and unsuccessful manpower programs. The research was part of a larger comparative study of women's involvement in two union organizing drives in Eastern Kentucky in the early 1970s (Maggard 1988). Both drives resulted in strikes: the United Mine Workers of America strike vs. Duke Power Company at its Brookside coal mine in Harlan County and the Communications Workers of America strike vs. Pikeville Methodist Hospital in Pike County.

Twenty women from the coal strike and twenty-four from the hospital strike were interviewed. At the time of their strike involvement, the women were working as homemakers, nurse's aides, cooks, kitchen helpers, housekeepers, and clerical workers. Some had never held paying jobs. Most had worked in a wide array of low-wage, service sector jobs. Only six had completed high school; ten had one-to-three years of high school; twenty had completed only the eighth grade; eight had less than eight years of school. Ten of the women had been enrolled in some kind of manpower training program.

Analysis of their life history data reveals that schooling gets sacrificed to gender roles and expectations about women's work. Women's education is rarely a priority, and family needs supersede women's desires to stay in school, enroll in semi-professional or professional courses of study, enter job training and technical skills programs, or pursue advanced degrees.

### **Dropping out of school and not getting back**

The most common reason cited for quitting school was poverty. "I had started high school," one woman explained. "They'd be seven of us in the family and I really couldn't afford [school]. So I just got a job. Started doing restaurant work."<sup>3</sup> Another woman quit school in the eighth grade because, "... my grandmother couldn't afford to send me to high school. That's the reason I didn't go." One woman from Harlan County recalled,

"I didn't get no education, for people were poor. I had to walk off the top of that mountain, come over here to school. I got the primer, half the fifth and half the sixth." One of the leaders in the coal strike quit school to take a \$35-a-week job baby sitting: "I had to buy all the school clothes [and] any food I had at school . . . because Dad just couldn't make it. When the mines worked, they didn't work enough for the men to support the size family that my mother and daddy had."

Women described crises which worsened financial situations in their families. A nurse's aide said, "I left home to work for people because our home burnt up and we lost everything we had." A strike created the family crisis that led another woman to quit: "I was going to high school . . . [I got] three years. Wished I'd went plumb through, but dad was on strike, and they didn't have much money. I knew I couldn't afford it, so I just quit." And a woman who worked over thirty years as a nurse's aide quit school because of her mother's illness: "My mother got real sick and had to have surgery. For two years [she] wasn't able to do anything. [I] took all the responsibility of the family."

Usually families interpreted crises in gender terms. Female children quit school to assume work necessary to keep households viable. One woman, who still dreams of becoming a nurse, said, "I went about two weeks [high school] and quit. Daddy was sick. When he couldn't work we couldn't afford to go. I stayed home and helped Mommy out with him." Another woman, who worked many years as a hospital cook, quit school after the eighth grade: "After my mother died I didn't get to go. See, I was the only girl among six brothers. I was the only girl at home." Although she loved the small country schools she had attended, there was no question that she, rather than one of her brothers, would quit school when her mother died.

As adults, the women repeated this childhood pattern of school sacrifice for family roles. One woman made several attempts to become a Registered Nurse. Most recently her husband's struggle with black lung stood in her way: "Somebody is all the time blocking me for what I've always dreamed about." Another nurse's aide gave up her dream to train to become a licensed practical nurse. "I went and signed up and was accepted," she said. "My youngest son had to have his appendix taken out. . . . So that knocked me out there. I couldn't leave my baby. I'd a went on and made a LPN if it hadn't been for that."

One of the most extreme examples of the way gender ideology restricts women was given by a woman who worked for years as a hospital kitchen helper. "Mommy didn't believe in girls getting a education," she said. "I turned sixteen, and I had to quit and stay home. I don't know why she believed that girls shouldn't get an education, but she just wouldn't let us go. She's got five girls and not a one of us graduated from high school."

Some of the women quit school to get married, but in each case marriage was seen as a solution to other problems. One woman quit the eighth grade to escape an abusive home situation: "I wasn't allowed to go anywhere by myself. Dad would whip me good. Dad was pretty rough on me. . . . I guess, you know, when you're young—I took off. . . . Mom signed the papers for us to get married." In other instances a married daughter meant one less child to support in stressed households. One woman married soon after her family was evicted from their home during a coal strike. "They [coal company] started giving house notices. So people had to move," she said. "We did have it rough for a while. [My dad] applied for his miner's pension and the black lung, and that took time. My mom had to go out and do housework for people in order to make ends meet." Soon after her family was evicted she quit school. "There was three of us in high school at that time, and it was rough going. As far as making expenses meet, it was really hard."

In some cases social class distinctions made school problematic and prompted women to drop out. "I passed two years in the sixth grade, and I didn't like that teacher," one Harlan County woman said. "I threatened to whip her. Me, a young kid, wanting to fight her. I didn't like her attitude." She explained that, "it was like she was better than the students. She had things, and she'd flaunt it. She just showed off. It turned me off. So I finally just married." Another woman fought a consolidation plan which would move her own children into a school dominated by middle class children. She wanted to protect them from the "class pain" she had experienced. These interviews parallel the findings in research with working class women in rural North Carolina and urban Philadelphia (Luttrell 1993) and working class males (Sennett and Cobb 1972).

### **Difficulties of trying to overcome barriers**

After the strikes were over, most of the women either renewed their educational efforts, took job training, or became politically active in their communities. Participation in the strikes disrupted traditional understandings of women's roles and created a kind of free space in which women changed their lives.

Change was most dramatic among women who had worked primarily as homemakers. Many of these women went back to school or trained at nearby community colleges and area vocational schools. One woman enrolled at a community college under a federal support program and had nearly completed an undergraduate degree at the time of her interview. Another woman went to college after the coal strike, finished an undergraduate degree, and had almost completed a master's degree at the time of her interview: "My two brothers and a sister, they had associates [degrees], but I was the first one to get a bachelor's. I'm going

to be the first to get a doctorate. Let me tell you!"

All of these women value education. Gender status, poverty, sexism, classism, and domestic abuse interfered with educational attainment. Still, their active pursuit of new skills, education, and political involvement after the strikes testifies to their desire for educational opportunities. If new federal programs address the problems described by these women, this research predicts high participation rates.

### **Past training programs**

Ten of the forty-four women interviewed had been involved in Manpower Development and Training programs in the 1960s. One had participated in a sewing project, and the others had trained for various positions in health services. In most cases, this helped them get low wage service jobs, but even so, none utilized their technical training in the new job. One woman who wound up with a hospital kitchen job described her training experience this way:

I went to the unemployment office for work. Me and my husband separated, and I didn't have no way of keeping up the kids. They told me about this program they had going up at the hospital. They'd pay me for going to school. Special diet course: how to fix diets for diabetics and people with heart trouble and high cholesterol, and stuff like that. I really enjoyed it.

After the training she was hired at the hospital. "I was making just about the same as they was paying me through that government—minimum wage," she said. "I didn't use that [training]. It didn't help me a bit. The only way it helped me was getting the job."

Federal workforce training in this era resulted in an underemployed labor force. Participants were unable to find jobs which used newly acquired skills or which paid above-minimum wages. Research on the more recent Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA)<sup>4</sup> reveals similarly disappointing results.

Participation in JTPA programs tends to be low. A survey of one hundred women who lost their jobs when a Tennessee apparel plant closed reveals that many women did not enroll because of their financial and health insurance concerns (Merrifield, Norris, and White 1991, 8, 36-38, 61-62). One woman said, "I had to go back to work to get insurance. My husband's medicine is very high priced" (Merrifield, Norris, and White 1991, 38). Another woman felt she could not afford to participate. "I wanted to get into the medical field, to have something stable," she said. "I signed up for LPN classes but didn't go because I needed a job, and didn't know how long it would be funded or if I could draw unemployment. . . . I didn't think I could afford to go (Merrifield, Norris, and White 1991, 37).

Women who do participate in programs find that they are not trained for growth occupations in technical and paraprofessional fields. In Tennessee, women were trained in stereotypically “female jobs,” like clerical work and nursing. The survey concluded that the training made no difference in the ability of participants to get full-time, well-paying jobs. Similarly, a recent Government Accounting Office analysis of the JTPA reveals that in over half of the regions studied, only 9 percent of the women who participated received training for jobs which paid \$7.00 or more an hour (GAO 1991).

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

New programs for labor force preparedness need to be connected to the present and future economic context. Problems particular to Central Appalachia in an era of profound economic change and lessons from past labor force programs and public school experiences suggest four recommendations.

First, any educational upgrade, job training, and school-to-work programs must be linked to changes in labor markets and economic growth policies influencing labor market change. Unless training is linked to economic development with a dual emphasis on education and occupations, earlier failures will recur and programs will prepare people for non-existent jobs.

Second, a “self-sufficiency standard” (Rose 1993, 7) should apply to job training. The Coalition on Women and Job Training, an alliance of twenty-seven national women’s job training, labor, education, civil rights, and economic development organizations, urges development of training programs which estimate regionally specific wage and benefit needs for participants, assess job opportunities, and enroll participants in training specifically directed to meeting those job needs (Rose 1993).

Third, an array of support services must accompany programs. Child care, transportation, health insurance, and family income support are necessary to sustain economically distressed participants. Counseling and crisis intervention may be needed. Programs must be particularly sensitive to location-specific social and cultural factors—including gender, class, and racial ideologies—which affect educational attainment.

Fourth, desirable forms of non-standard economic activities should be strengthened with training, funding, credit, technical assistance, marketing, and licensing and regulatory assistance. This support can move innovative grassroots development projects into viable economic options.

Without attention to these recommendations, the labor force may well segment into at least four tiers. At the top are highly skilled and well-educated workers of the “information age.” At a second tier there

are people who complete training and education required for technical occupations. At the third tier there are displaced workers who “retrain” for inadequate jobs and make up the “contingent” labor force. Finally, outside of the formal labor market, there are people who piece together the resources to survive through non-standard activities.

It is no simple task to create a “world class workforce” based on sustainable economic activity which translates to economic security. It is imperative that we intentionally address the needs of displaced workers, new entrants to the work force, and communities. It is also imperative that we do this with broad-based, democratic participation in planning new economic policy and in designing the programs which will equip people to be active participants in the emerging economy.

## *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> A federally defined subregion of the larger Appalachian Region, Central Appalachia consists of sixty counties located in four states: Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee (Appalachian Regional Commission 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Literature on the “informal economy” is growing and conceptually diverse (see Brown and Scase 1991; Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989; Christensen 1988). Here the term “non-standard economic activity” describes grass-roots economic strategies emerging in response to de-industrialization in Appalachia. Much is highly organized, “informal” only in the sense that it may fall outside traditional employer-employee wage relationships and government regulation. Discussions in this article of “non-standard economic” activity and segmentation of the labor force draw heavily from my collaborative work on economic restructuring with University of Tennessee law professor Fran Ansley.

<sup>3</sup> All quotations in this paper are from the author’s interviews with women who participated in these two strikes, unless otherwise noted. To protect privacy of respondents, names of interviewees are not published here. For similar reasons the exact dates and places of interviews are not published. All interviews were conducted in respondents’ homes, work places, or mutually arranged sites during 1986 and 1987. Respondents signed special interview release forms setting the terms of use of their interviews. The interviews and additional strike documents are housed in the “Women and Political Protest” collection of the Appalachian Collection, University of Kentucky.

<sup>4</sup> The 1982 Job Training Partnership Act was intended to retrain dislocated workers in new job skills. In 1989 this mission was transferred to the Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance Act.

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# Scotland, Appalachia, and the Politics of Postmodern Culture

Richard Blaustein

Since the early seventies, the idea of Appalachia as internal colony has captured the imagination of regional scholars and activists (Lewis, Johnson, and Askins 1978; Williams 1979; Simon 1981; McKenzie 1989).<sup>1</sup> The critique of the internal colonialism model within Appalachian Studies has become increasingly sophisticated over the years. In their recently published essay, "Appalachian Studies, Resistance, and Postmodernism," Alan Banks, Dwight Billings, and Karen Tice (1993, 284-285) observe that a central theme in the cultural politics and literature of present-day Appalachia is the resolution of the internalized colonial struggle between a dominant mainstream and a subordinated periphery.<sup>2</sup> They characterize Rodger Cunningham's *Apples on the Flood* as "a sophisticated and deeply probing application of the colonial model of Appalachia and an extended essay on the cultural and psychological consequences of peripheralization" (1993, 294).

Seeking to recapture an authentic sense of identity by returning to an idealized homeplace to "heal the divided self," as Rodger Cunningham puts it in *Apples On The Flood* (1987, 171), and coming to terms with what Allen Batteau calls "double otherness" in *The Invention of Appalachia* (1990, 37) are not uniquely Appalachian experiences. Rather, it can be argued that the Appalachian identity movement and the field of Appalachian Studies itself, are local expressions of global trends which developed at the end of the twentieth century. These trends include the fragmentation and diversification accompanying the devolution of modern centrist states and colonial empires which have historically sought to superimpose metropolitan elite cultural standards upon their

peripheral subjects and subordinates. The very notion of universal standards is under attack in the emergent postmodern world, not only in the academy but in everyday life.

Support for this position can be found in David McCrone's *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation*. McCrone constructs a theoretical framework to explain the Scottish struggle to preserve a sense of distinct identity despite centuries of English political and cultural dominance. He proposes that the Scottish experience provides a particularly British example of separatist and fragmentary movements spawned by the decay of nation-states, colonial empires, and other forms of central authority at the end of the twentieth century (McCrone 1992, 3). Much of what McCrone has to say about the contemporary Scottish neonationalist movement and its relationship to the revival and study of Scottish folklore, literature, and language directly applies to analogous developments in Appalachia during the same period.

There are striking parallels between the politics of culture and identity in Scotland and Appalachia, but important differences as well. Appalachian identity is much more problematic and tenuous than Scottish identity: Appalachia never had a monarch, capital, or parliament. Few people designated as Appalachian, apart from regional activists and intellectuals, use that term to identify themselves; most think of themselves as Americans first, not Appalachians or southern mountaineers. By contrast, seven out of ten modern Scots think of themselves as Scottish rather than British (McCrone 1992, 198), and there are millions of nationals of other countries who consider themselves Scottish, even though their ancestors may have left Scotland generations ago. Though Scotland lost its political sovereignty following the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, it has preserved a high degree of civil and religious autonomy and experienced a continuous succession of cultural revitalization movements. For nearly three hundred years, Scots at home and abroad have asserted their distinctive communal identity through literature, language, and folk culture. The romantic reconstruction of Appalachian culture is a much more recent phenomenon, no more than 120 years old.

Nonetheless, the similarities between the politics of culture in Scotland and Appalachia merit careful examination, especially in view of the postmodernist approach to Appalachian Studies advocated by Banks et al. McCrone describes his own approach to Scottish neonationalism as postmodern. McCrone's vision of postmodernism stems from his rejection of the classical rationalist premises upon which modernism is based: that scientific and industrial advancement inevitably lead to cultural and social homogeneity, and that universal cultural standards (including modes of discourse) are desirable or even sustainable (Banks, Billings,

and Tice 1993, 291-292).

Postmodernism is a fact of life for McCrone, not a theoretical construct. Multinational corporations and international political organizations are undercutting the sovereign powers of the classical nation-state; neonationalism, neoregionalism, religious neofundamentalism, neofascism, and a bewildering array of cultural, social, and sexual identity reformulation movements are confounding old line economic and social class determinists. Postmodern personal and cultural identities are plural and complex, varying from one social context to another. Counter-hegemonic movements, such as cultural revivals, are an inherent feature of postmodern life. Increasingly, cultural identities are voluntarily assumed rather than externally ascribed (Abrahams 1993). Competing languages and clashing styles are the postmodern norm; claims of cultural universality are increasingly suspect. The politics of postmodernism is basically the struggle of contending countercultures to invalidate what Rodger Cunningham, borrowing a phrase from Raymond Williams, calls "the internalized dominative mode" and authenticate themselves by redefining the terms of cultural discourse to suit their disparate desires (Cunningham 1989, 132).

The Appalachian identity movement and Scottish neonationalism derive from comparable sources and have struggled with very similar questions. McCrone describes how neo-Marxist intellectuals in Scotland attempted to apply Immanuel Wallerstein's concepts of world capitalist systems to Scotland by classifying it as a periphery of the metropolitan English core, just as Appalachia was similarly characterized as an internal colony in the 1970s. McCrone summarizes a debate between Wallerstein and Scottish social historian T.C. Smout, who contends that Scotland was not peripheral to the British economy, but fully integrated within it, although undeniably politically subordinate. Dependency did not condemn Scotland to permanent poverty, says Smout, but enabled it to achieve a high degree of industrial productivity (McCrone 1992, 42-49). McCrone challenges the portrayal of Scotland as an underdeveloped periphery, though it is definitely subordinate to the core of British political and economic power.

McCrone also critiques Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (1975), an attempt to apply Wallerstein's ideas to Britain. Basically, Hechter divides Britain into a metropolitan English core and a Celtic periphery: Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Following Gramsci and Wallerstein, Hechter asserts that ethnic groups are socially and economically stratified, with the English maintaining hegemony over the subordinate groups. McCrone writes:

Celtic nationalism is the political response to the persistence of

regional inequality, and in particular to the process of anglicisation, especially in language and religion. . . . While diffusion models predict the demise of peripheral ethnicity, the internal colonial model is justified insofar as ethnicity has persisted and grown (1992, 59).

Uneven development accounts for social and cultural distinctions between periphery and core (1992, 60). While McCrone feels that Hechter's model does not fit the historical facts of Scottish industrial development, he nonetheless stresses the attractiveness of the internal colonialism metaphor to Scottish, neo-Marxist, nationalist intellectuals. McCrone's own analysis of the relationship of Scotland's economy to that of the entire United Kingdom concludes that while the Scottish economy is not significantly distinct from the British mainstream, Scottish rejection of British hegemony is nonetheless definitely increasing (1992, 86-87). This conclusion creates serious problems for old line material determinists who view culture as peripheral to economic forces.

Culturally speaking, Scotland has always been a complex society characterized by competing traditions and mythologies: "There are, of course, competing versions of Scotland, using distinctions which have a mythological base. . . . At any point in history, some versions of Scotland win out over others" (McCrone 1992, 31). McCrone's discussion of Scottish cultural images and icons centers around the antipathy of Scottish neo-Marxist intellectuals, especially Tom Nairn (1977), to romantic, nostalgic, folksy, kitschy manifestations of Scottishness like tartanry and the Kailyard school of late nineteenth and early twentieth century local color popular literature.

Scotland is supposedly a more open and upwardly mobile society than England (McCrone 1992, 89-92). This is reflected in the idealization of the Gaidhealtachd and the Kailyard: the "idyllised" folk communities of the Gaelic-speaking Highlands and Western Islands and the Anglophone Lowlands of Scotland, comparable to the supposedly egalitarian, self-sufficient Appalachian homestead of the preindustrial period. (Rhetorically, these imagined folk communities serve very similar functions; historically, it really doesn't matter if they never existed in pure form.)

The Kailyard ("cabbage patch") school celebrates petit bourgeois values in an idealized rural setting. The success of the "lad of pairts," the Scottish equivalent of Horatio Alger's nineteenth century American "rags to riches" heroes, is a central motif in this literature, which mythologizes industrialization and urbanization while ostensibly celebrating rusticity. The underlying message is that Scots with get up and go *literally* got up and went, leaving their less energetic kinfolk at home to vegetate in the Kailyard.

It would be instructive to compare these interpretations of the Scottish Kailyard genre with analyses of Appalachian local color literature, such as Allen Batteau's depiction in *The Invention of Appalachia*<sup>3</sup> of the novels of John Fox, Jr. as parables of the sacrifice of nature for the sake of the advancement of civilization, and also Rodger Cunningham's "Signs of Civilization: *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* as Colonial Narrative" (1990). The literature of the Kailyard school, engrossing though it may be, is much less visible to the world at large than bagpipes, kilts, and tartan.

Tartan is so strongly associated with Scottishness in the popular imagination that it comes as a shock to learn that some modern Scots despise it as a symbol of Scottish complicity in British colonialism. Scottish neo-Marxists coined the derisive term "tartanry" to describe the complex of romantic cultural symbols that developed following the failure of the Jacobite Movement. Tom Nairn calls tartanry "the tartan monster" (McCrone 1992, 180-81). McCrone says:

Tartanry was not a literary movement, but a set of garish symbols appropriated by Lowland Scotland at a safe distance from 1745, and turned into a music hall joke (Harry Lauder represented the fusion of both Tartanry and Kailyard—the jokes and mores from the latter, the wrapping from the former). . . . [T]artanry has come to stand for tourist knick-knackery, visits to Wembley, and the Edinburgh Tattoo. Oddly, no serious analysis of tartanry, the sets of symbols and images, has been carried out by Scottish intellectuals though there are a number of studies of the history of tartan (1992, 181).

The subject of tartanry is so emotionally loaded for modern Scots that many scholars shy away from coming to terms with it. Tom Nairn's scorn for tartanry is palpable: "Tartanry will not wither away, if only because it possesses the force of its own vulgarity—immunity from doubt and higher culture" (Nairn 1977, 165).

Nairn views tartanry and the Kailyard school of literature from an orthodox Marxist perspective as forms of false consciousness:

Scottish culture is schizophrenic; its low culture a bastard product, partly indigenous and partly maintained by British imperial mechanisms (the Scottish soldier is the obvious example). This sense of separation, of fragmentation runs through much intellectual analysis of Scotland (1977, 184).

Compare Nairn's statement with Batteau's assertion that "Appalachia represents the convergence of two traditions, each of which contains its own contradiction" (Batteau 1990, 27), and one finds very similar philosophical premises underlying their interpretations of cultural

expressions of romantic subnationalism such as tartanry and folkloric revivals. Nairn and Batteau reveal intense antipathy to folklore scholarship and folk revivalism, which they consider to be forms of romanticism promoting false consciousness.

Though much gentler in tone than Nairn or his American counterpart Batteau, McCrone is nonetheless critical of the modern folk revival in Scotland. Scholars and amateur proponents of Scottish folklore, language, and literature have been primarily concerned with selectively preserving the cultural legacy of an idealized past while overlooking contemporary political, economic, and social realities: "The task was too readily defined as one of conservation rather than development, of protecting the legacy of the past rather than planning the future" (McCrone 1992, 4). Appalachian Studies is similarly divided (Miller 1982; Fine and Speer 1983).

Some Scottish intellectuals have detected an element of self-hatred in folklore-bashing and the debunking of Scottish romantic nationalist symbology. Beveridge and Turnbull, in *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals*, accuse Nairn of "a deep aversion to everything native and local" (1989, 59). Allegedly, Nairn has absorbed "metropolitan" (i.e., elite Anglo-British) values and has sacrificed nationalism for the supposedly higher goal of socialism.

McCrone believes that pure, isolated national cultures and identities don't exist in the postmodern world:

More radically, we might suggest that the search for a single carrier of national identity is doomed to ignore the pluralism and complexity of identity in the late twentieth century. The search for such a single identity in contemporary nationalism seems increasingly time-bound and anachronistic (1992, 191).

Nonetheless, the myth of the pure, primordial folk culture is a central feature of romantic nationalism in the past and present: "Lying behind the deformed image is a sense of her 'golden age,' pre-independence, when society and the state were one" (McCrone 1992, 192). This statement evokes the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard's archetypal images of infantile reverie and the Dream House (the home of the primordial commune) explored by Parks Lanier, Jr. and other critics of modern Appalachian literature in *The Poetics of Appalachian Space* (Lanier 1991). Representations of the primeval Golden Age are found in the mythologies of all revival movements. The rhetorical function of the Golden Age motif is to stand in opposition to the unsatisfying present (Chapman 1992; Williams 1958).

Like Jim Wayne Miller and Gurney Norman in Appalachia, McCrone believes that individuals as well as societies can be multicultural (1992, 194). "British" and "Scottish" identities are not necessarily mutually



exclusive, no more than "American" and "Appalachian." In the post-modern world, multiple cultures and plural identities are normal. To support this assertion, McCrone cites a student of contemporary Scottish literature, Cairns Craig, who observes:

The fragmentation and division which made Scotland seem abnormal to an earlier part of the 20th century came to be the norm for most of the world's population. Bilingualism, biculturalism, and the inheritance of a diversity of fragmented traditions were to be the source of creativity rather than its inhibition in the second half of the 20th [century], and Scotland ceased to measure itself against the false norms, psychological as well as cultural, of the unified national tradition (McCrone 1992, 194).

Ultimately, McCrone believes that debunkers like Nairn and Batteau are missing the point about cultural politics in the postmodern world when they try to expose the presumed historical falsity of tartan and similar icons of national, ethnic, and regional identity. McCrone states: "national myths survive because they function to make sense of the present rather than the past. . . . What we see are new versions of Scottishness emerging, with different political and cultural resonances" (1992, 199-201). "Ethnicity did not wither but revived as a source of identity to meet new emergent needs. . . ," he says. "The resurgence of local or ethnic nationalisms came to be seen not as in direct contradiction to increasing globalisation of economic, political and cultural power but as part of the process itself" (1992, 10). Like Appalachia, "Scotland has what we might call a rich myth-history, which is often at odds with 'history' proper" (1992, 10).

Scots have constructed countermythologies, some which, like the famous case of MacPherson's *Ossian*, have been exposed as forgeries. Neal Ascherson, in "The Religion of Nationalism," says:

We talk easily about the forging of a nation, but forgery has played a real part in the foundation and revival of many nations. In Scotland we should know that better than most. *Ossian* was a forgery, but the emotions about nations and history roused by James MacPherson's pastiche of genuine Gaelic myth cycles was real enough. Finland's national epic, the 'Kalevala' emerged rather later, but doesn't bear close inspection either (1988, 61).

In the final analysis, McCrone's pragmatic understanding of the fabrication of cultural identity symbols agrees with the American folklorist Alan Dundes' conclusion in the chapter titled "The Fabrication of Fakelore" in *Folklore Matters* (1988) that folklorists cannot prevent the folk from believing that fakelore is folklore.<sup>4</sup> *Understanding Scotland* offers a corrective to the rigidly anti-romantic stance assumed by Allen

Batteau in his review essay, "An Agenda for Irrelevance: Malcolm Chapman's *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture*," in which he urges the Appalachian Studies community to read Chapman's study of Celtic romantic nationalism in Scotland, even though it doesn't contain a word about Appalachia in particular:

It ought to be read for its warnings against the traps involved in such romantic constructions as the True Highlanders (or the True Appalachians), and its discussion of the intellectual dishonesty and political irresponsibility involved in nostalgia for a past that never existed (Batteau 1981, 212).

In postmodernist terms, Batteau's efforts to explode romantic myths that presumably obscure historical truths can be classified as *essentialism*, "the tendency to treat historical and social constructions as fixed, natural, and absolute" (Banks, Billings, and Tice 1993, 292). This also defines *ethnocentrism*, the antithesis of the inherently pluralistic anthropological concept of *cultural relativism*. Trained as a cultural anthropologist, Batteau ought to know that symbols mean what people need them to mean, in Scotland, Appalachia, or anywhere else in the world, and that complex societies have conflicting countercultures and clashing countermythologies. As McCrone says, a community is ultimately a symbolic construct: "it does not reside in geographical or even social territory so much as in people's minds" (1992, 32). The emotional investments people make in myths and other cultural identity symbols, not antiquity or pedigree, give them power to bind communities together and distinguish them from other communities. Traditions are not simply passed along from generation to generation, they also evolve to satisfy changing needs and desires. As McCrone puts it:

Traditions may be invented; symbols of national identity are manufactured. Perhaps there is a suggestion in the word 'invented' that myths and traditions are fabricated; what seems to happen is that the cultural raw materials are refashioned in a manner that gives coherence and meaning to action. The task is not to debunk these inventions, but to show how and why they are put to such telling use (1992, 3).

The pragmatic approach to the politics of postmodern culture and identity presented in McCrone's *Understanding Scotland* can provide Appalachianists with an agenda for relevance that goes beyond debunking and folklore-bashing, as well as enlivening discourse concerning the "Celtic Question" on both sides of the Atlantic.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>John Alexander Williams says: “The main problem with the internal colonialism model is not its misuse but its relative inutility. ‘We may be guilty of stretching some of the analogies to compare the region with colonies dominated by another country,’ admits Lewis. ‘A very real difference is the ability of the dominated country to eventually throw the invaders out.’ Precisely. Appalachia has no prospect of independence, either in fantasy or in fact. Why then cast the analysis of its grievances in what are essentially nationalistic terms?” (1979, 158-159). Roberta McKenzie traces the history of the influence of Antonio Gramsci’s regionalist neo-Marxism, Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory, and the anti-colonialism of Frantz Fanon on Appalachian intellectuals in the 1970s (1989).

<sup>2</sup>See Cunningham 1987, also 1989. Accardo (1984) outlines the resolution of the internalized crisis of conflicting identities experienced by hillbilly/hippy David Ray “Divine Right” Davenport: “His mind was very neatly divided in two. Half of it was clear and half of it was muddy, but it was hard to keep up with which side was which because both sides claimed to be clear, and each denied that it was muddy” (Norman 1971, 78).

<sup>3</sup>The theme of civilizing the Appalachian wilderness is metaphorically expressed in sexual terms in Batteau’s analysis (1990, 64-69) of John Fox, Jr.’s first published Appalachian story “Mountain Europa” in which an educated urban gentleman courts and transforms a mountain maiden who embodies nature and wildness. Batteau’s analysis can be visualized in the following table of bi-polar oppositions:

|    |              |       |                             |
|----|--------------|-------|-----------------------------|
|    | male         | is to | female                      |
| as | civilization | is to | wilderness                  |
|    | modernity    |       | backwardness                |
|    | industry     |       | self-sufficient agriculture |
|    | lowlands     |       | mountain                    |
|    | order        |       | chaos                       |

Some intriguing phallic/serpentine imagery rears its neo-Freudian head in Batteau’s reading of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1990, 70-74). Hero Jack Hale drags “the ancestral chain” across the mountains, sheds the “snake skin” of civilization and recovers his primordial (Anglo-Saxon) vitality (1990, 70). Hale

fails in business, goes native, and marries June Tolliver, a light-skinned “dusky maiden” (1990, 71). According to Batteau, Appalachia is an arrested civilization, “. . . a representation of the chaos and disorder on the periphery of commercial and industrial expansion” (1990, 72).

<sup>4</sup>For a highly relevant discussion of the “invention” of cultural traditions and romantic nationalism comparing *Ossian* and the “Kalevala” see Alan Dundes (1988).

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